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**Holding Heaven in Their Hands:  
An Examination of the Functions, Materials, and  
Ornament of Insular House-shaped Shrines  
Vol. 1**

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## **Declaration**

"I hereby declare that I am the sole author of this thesis; that the following thesis is entirely my own work; and that no part of this thesis has been submitted for another degree or qualification".

Signed.....*Samuel Thomas Gerace III*.....



## Abstract

Since the nineteenth century, the provenances, functions, and defining characteristics of a group of Insular portable containers, commonly called house-, tomb-, or church-shaped shrines, have been of interest to a number of disciplines such as History of Art, Archaeology, and Museology. As nearly all Insular house-shaped shrines were found empty or in fragmentary states, their original contents are a continued point of scholarly debate. In response to these examinations and based in part on the seventh-century riddle on the Chrismal found in the *Ænigmata* of Aldhelm, bishop of Sherborne, this thesis proposes questions such as: what type of container is best categorised as an Insular house-shaped shrine, what were their original contents and functions, and do their forms and materials communicate any specific cultural message(s)? By engaging with the two core concepts of functionality and materiality, which are further informed through direct object handlings of select Insular portable shrines, this thesis examines the forms and materials used in their construction. Taking these questions and the historical conversation into account, this thesis draws on the terminology employed to denote sacral containers in Old Irish and Latin works, which include hagiography and penitentials, discussions on the Temple of Jerusalem within early medieval exegesis, depictions of Insular house-shaped shrines and analogous forms in stonework and other mediums, and antiquarian, archaeological, and anthropological accounts of the discovery of Insular house-shaped shrines to more fully examine the functions of these enigmatic boxes. In doing so, the place of Insular house-shaped shrines within early medieval art, both Continental and Insular, will be more fully outlined. Additionally, a working definition of what can constitute an Insular house-shaped shrine is developed by examining their materiality, form, and prescribed functional terms, such as ‘reliquary’ and ‘chrismal’. Finally, this thesis shows that the functions of Insular house-shaped shrines are best understood in an overlapping and pluralistic sense, namely, that they were containers for a variety of forms of sacral matter and likely were understood as relics themselves only in later periods, which modern antiquarians later used as meaning-making devices in their writings on the spread of the early medieval ‘Celtic’ Church.



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## Introduction

The antiquarian literature of the nineteenth century created a category of small boxes of Insular design and ornament and commonly referred to them as house-, tomb-, or church-shaped shrines. They have continued to be the subject of scholarly enquiries. These ‘house-shaped’ portable shrines are small rectangular boxes with hinged trapezoidal roofs, which can easily be held within one’s hands, carried in a small bag, or, when constructed with rings or suspension fittings, worn on the body or suspended. The lids of these portable shrines are attached to the base boxes by hinges and are secured through internal locking mechanisms, making them ideal for transportation. While the contents of these portable shrines do not often survive, the contents attributed to these Insular house-shaped containers range from relics, the Eucharist, chrism oil, or a combination of these materials. In 1891, Denis Murphy wrote about this small group of portable shrines recently discovered in rivers, lakes, and loughs in Ireland that their ‘number is so small, and the interest attaching to each of them is so great, arising partly from their historical associations and partly from their intrinsic merits as specimens of Irish art, that any addition to their number is well worthy’.<sup>1</sup> Over the last thirty years, this group of Insular portable shrines has grown from only a handful to eighteen complete or fragmented shrines, along with various associated fragments. Moreover, the cultural importance of these objects as national treasures has not waned. The Monymusk shrine, named so after being discovered in Monymusk House in Aberdeenshire, Scotland, is

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<sup>1</sup> Denis Murphy, ‘On the Ornamentation of the Lough Erne Shrine’, *Journal of the Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland* Fifth Series, 2, no. 4 (1892): 349.

currently given pride-of-place in the National Museum of Scotland, Edinburgh in their Kingdom of the Scots wing, where it is surrounded by Pictish art [Figure 1]. The Declaration of Arbroath, painted on the walls of the exhibit, subtly links the shrine to wider themes in Scotland's past. Perhaps more famously, the Clydesdale £20 banknote features the shrine, where it sits under the imposing figure of Robert the Bruce despite its weak, if not fabled, association with the famous Scottish king [Figure 2].

This thesis examines Insular house-shaped shrines through the lens of textual sources from the contemporary to the early medieval, as a key concern of this study is the nomenclature used to denote Insular house-shaped shrines. By critiquing how Insular house-shaped shrines are referred to in modern sources, we are more fully able to question the appropriateness, applicability, and clarity of similar and divergent terms used in early medieval sources to denote portable shrines, thereby allowing for a closer examination of the use-lives of these sacred containers. The questions derived from these initial textual examinations are then turned onto the physical construction and materiality of Insular house-shaped shrines, which further includes a comparison of the material and mechanical differences between Insular house-shaped shrines and contemporary *comparanda*, both Insular and Continental. Finally, by interrogating the poetic discussion and visual description of portable shrines and ecclesiastical architecture, the relationship between the materials, ornamentation, and construction of Insular house-shaped shrines and the symbolism present in the earthly and heavenly Church is more fully understood.

## **Insular House-Shaped Portable Shrines**

Before delving further, it is important first to introduce the eighteen Insular house-shaped shrines and six ridgepole fragments that are at the centre of this study. Rather than discuss all possible Insular house-shaped shrine fragments, this thesis specifically focuses on ridgepoles. Other fragments, such as suspension straps and decorative mounts, originally could have adorned a variety of containers or shrine forms, while the ridgepoles of Insular house-shaped shrines could only decorate trapezoidal lids; they are a feature intimately tied to Insular house-shaped shrine construction.

Given the number of artefacts central to this thesis and in the interest of clarity, only one of the popular names for each Insular house-shaped shrine or fragment is used, although alternative names will be noted. It is important to acknowledge that these names were ascribed by various scholars over the past two centuries due to a variety of reasons, such as: indicating the shrine's then or current location or holding institution, recording its places of discovery, and even documenting significant previous owners. However, these names should not be taken to mean that the shrines necessarily originated at these locations or, in the case of eponymic names, that they were passed through ancient hereditary ownership. The following shrines and fragments are divided into their general provenances to highlight the spread of these portable shrines across Europe. Finally, this study explicitly includes Anglo-Saxon portable house-shaped shrines in order to make this grouping truly Insular in breadth, a parameter that has not been fully utilised in previous studies.

The largest group of Insular portable shrines consists of those discovered in Ireland or, in the case of artefacts with unknown provenances, those first displayed at Irish institutions. Beginning with the National Museum of Ireland in Dublin, four shrines and two ridgepoles are currently part of their collection: the fragmented Clonard shrine, the Shannon shrine on permanent loan from the National Museum of Scotland, and two shrines collectively called the Lough Erne shrines. The Emly shrine, which now resides in the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston Massachusetts, was first held by the Dublin Museum before it was illicitly sold in the 1950s.<sup>2</sup> In Northern Ireland, the Clonmore shrine and three ridgepole fragments are currently held in the Ulster Museum, Belfast.

The Clonard shrine [Figures 3.A-D] consists of only two tinned-copper-alloy panels, one escutcheon, and half a suspension strap. Still, the length of the two panels suggests that the Clonard shrine would have been the largest of the known Insular house-shaped shrines. Furthermore, despite its fragmented state, a small portion of blue glass can be seen on the zoomorphic suspension strap hinge [Figure 3.B], while small perforations around the edges of both panels suggest they were attached to a wooden box [Figures 3.C-D]. Ragnall Ó Floinn's research into its provenance suggests that it was found during the Boyne drainage of the 1840s and donated to the Royal Irish Academy, either at the time or through a later individual donation, before it was listed in 1861 in Sir William Wilde's *Catalogue of Animal Materials and Bronze in the Museum of the Royal Irish Academy*.<sup>3</sup> Similarly, the exact find-spot of

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<sup>2</sup> Charles Fanning, 'Lodestone: Following the Emly Shrine', *New Hibernia Review* 13, no. 1 (2009): 14-15.

<sup>3</sup> Ragnall Ó Floinn, 'A Fragmentary House-Shaped Shrine from Clonard, Co. Meath', *The Journal of Irish Archaeology* 5 (1989/1990): 49-52; W. R. Wilde, *A Descriptive Catalogue of the Antiquities in the Museum of the Royal Irish Academy* (Dublin: Hodges, Smith & Co., 1857), 641.

the Shannon shrine [Figures 4.A-I] is unknown. It was originally found sometime before 1880 with other bronze artefacts in the river Shannon in Ireland.<sup>4</sup> The shrine itself was constructed entirely from metal plates. The lid and box of the shrine were both formed by bending two panels of copper alloy and then riveting panels of copper alloy onto the sides of the box and lid [Figures 4.H-I], a feature unique to the Shannon shrine. The shrine is in a highly fragmented state and missing both suspension straps, the ridgepole, the locking pin, two escutcheons, and portions of the lid and box.

Unlike the above shrines, the two shrines known as the Lough Erne shrines (A-B) have a known find-spot, as they were discovered by a fisherman in the spring of 1891 near Lough Erne, Ireland.<sup>5</sup> The Lough Erne shrine (A) [Figures 5.A-H] is the largest of the surviving Insular house-shaped shrines with extant lids. The shrine was constructed by attaching tinned-copper-alloy panels to a hollowed-out box of yew wood [Figures 5.F-G] and further securing them with copper-alloy U-shaped bindings. The ridgepole is gilt and features two animal-head terminals with blue glass studs; these face towards a miniature skeuomorphic house-shaped shrine at the centre of the ridgepole [Figures 5.A, H]. Only one of the medallions survives on the face of the shrine; on it, imitation gilt chip carving surrounds a conical piece of amber. The back of the shrine was also decorated with medallions, but erosion has destroyed much of the detail in this regard [Figure 5.B]. On the sides of the shrine, only portions of the suspension straps remain [Figures 5.C-D]. Next, the smaller hip-

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<sup>4</sup> John Duns, 'Notice of an Ancient Celtic Reliquary Ornamented with Interlaced Work', *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland* 14 (1879-80): 286.

<sup>5</sup> 'Mr Plunkett described the exact spot where it was found. There is a small bay on the western shore of Lower Lough Erne, about midway between Enniskillen and Belleek', Denis Murphy, 'On a Shrine Lately Found in Lough Erne, Now Belonging to Thomas Plunkett, Esq. T.C., Ennis-Killen', *Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy (1889-1901)* 2 (1891-1893): 290.

roof box (B) was found nested inside the larger shrine (A). As part of its conservation, the surviving tinned-copper-alloy panels of the Lough Erne shrine (B) were attached to a piece of modern wood [Figures 6.A-E]. The smaller shrine is missing one of the box and both roof-gable panels, although the lower portions of both suspension hinges still survive [Figures 6.C-D]. Despite its fragmented state, remnants of soldering found along the edges of the panels suggest that they were not attached to a wooden core, while perforations on the lid of the shrine further suggest that a ridgepole may have once adorned the shrine [Figures 6.A-B].<sup>6</sup>

As mentioned above, the National Museum of Ireland also possesses two ridgepoles, both of unknown provenances and each constructed from cast copper-alloy.<sup>7</sup> On the first ridgepole, two beast terminals frame a face or mask at the centre of the ridgepole, along with two panels of zoomorphic interlace [Figures 7.A-B]. This is the only instance of a figure appearing on an Insular house-shaped shrine ridgepole. The back of the ridgepole has become smooth with age and use, but a trace of interlace suggests the back would have been decorated as well. The second ridgepole [Figure 8] is the longest of the extant ridgepoles and, had its shrine survived, it would have been possibly larger than either the Lough Erne (A) or Clonard shrines. The terminals appear to be curvilinear in design while the centre decoration is a rectangular piece of carved interlace with two animals or figures placed above, each facing the other.

The last shrine associated with the National Museum of Ireland is the Emly shrine [Figures 9.A-C]. It was purchased from Edmon Alan Tremeur de Poher de la

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<sup>6</sup> *The Work of Angels: Masterpieces of Celtic Metalwork, 6th-9th centuries A.D.*, ed. Susan Youngs (London: British Museum, 1989), 135.

<sup>7</sup> E. C. R. Armstrong, 'Lord Emly's Shrine; Two Ridge-poles of Shrines, and Two Bronze Castings', *The Antiquaries Journal* 2, no. 2 (1922): 138-9.

Poer-Monsell in 1952 and moved from the Royal Irish Academy in Dublin, Ireland to the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston, Massachusetts.<sup>8</sup> The shrine was carved from a single block of yew wood and the front of the shrine is decorated with strips of tinned lead, which were hammered into the wood. The shrine is further decorated with a series of gilt copper-alloy tubes that follow the edges of the shrine, while three medallions, decorated with yellow and green enamel, adorn the face of the shrine. While neither side strap survives, the zoomorphic ridgepole, with two bird-like beasts decorated in yellow and green enamel, can still be seen on the shrine's roof.

Next, the Clonmore shrine, also known as the Blackwater shrine [Figures 10.A-J], is currently held at the Ulster Museum of Northern Ireland, Belfast along with three ridgepole fragments. The Clonmore shrine was initially found as four pieces by the river Blackwater at Clonmore, Co. Armagh.<sup>9</sup> Further excavations in 1991 and 2000 by the Ulster Museum yielded two side panels [Figures 10.C-D], the base of the shrine [Figure 10.E], fragments of the locking pin [Figures 10.F-G], and three other associated mounts which may have been the suspension strap [Figures 10.H-I].<sup>10</sup> The Clonmore shrine was constructed entirely from soldered tinned-copper-alloy panels, which were further decorated with incised aniconic Insular motifs throughout. The Clonmore shrine was further ornamented with five dish-shaped pieces of blue glass set into the face of the shrine. The panels of the shrine would have been attached by soldering, while the lid was attached by a finger-joint hinge [Figure 10.J]. Also held at the Ulster Museum of Northern Ireland are three

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<sup>8</sup> Georg Swarzenski, 'An Early Anglo-Irish Portable Shrine', *Bulletin of the Museum of Fine Arts* 52, no. 289 (1954): 50-2.

<sup>9</sup> Cormac Bourke, 'The Blackwater Shrine', *Dúiche Néill: Journal of the O'Neill Country Historical Society* 6 (1991): 103.

<sup>10</sup> '2000:0026 - CLONMORE, Armagh', Database of Irish Excavation Reports, <http://www.excavations.ie/report/2000/Armagh/0004846/>, accessed October 5 2015.



Blackwater ridgepoles, which were discovered in dredges from the River Blackwater between Blackwatertown and Lough Neagh.<sup>11</sup> The first of these fragments are part of a ridgepole that was severely distorted and damaged [Figure 11.A]. A miniature house-shaped shrine can be seen on the mount and gilt chip-carved strands of interlace further adorn the fragment [Figure 11.B].<sup>12</sup> The second mount is an incomplete ridgepole, consisting of one stylised animal-head terminal [Figure 12]. Green enamel was used for the eye and fangs, while yellow enamel appears in two conjoined cells.<sup>13</sup> Lastly, the third mount is a complete ridgepole fragment, although it too is distorted [Figure 13.A]. Two stylised animal-head terminals face a miniature house-shaped shrine, situated at the centre of the ridgepole. As with the second mount, yellow and green enamel were employed in the decoration of the ridgepole. The back was left plain [Figure 13.B].<sup>14</sup>

Unlike Ireland, only one Insular house-shaped shrine has been discovered in Scotland thus far. Currently, the Monymusk shrine is held in the National Museum of Scotland in Edinburgh along with a recently acquired ridgepole of unknown provenance. The Monymusk shrine [Figures 14.A-F] was constructed from a hollowed-out box of yew wood, which was further decorated with copper-alloy and silver panels. The shrine is missing two of its decorative mounts and its right suspension strap; the silver panels on the face of the shrine also display patterns that suggest the shrine was forcibly opened at one point. The surviving suspension strap is decorated with curvilinear designs and red enamel; a small ‘sunburst’ or ‘flower’

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<sup>11</sup> Bourke, 'Antiquities from the River Blackwater, IV, Early Medieval Non-Ferrous Metalwork', *Ulster Journal of Archaeology* Third Series, 69 (2010): 24.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, No. 141, 48.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, No. 220, 56.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, No. 237, 58.

pattern in yellow enamel can be seen on the lower hinge of the suspension strap [Figure 14.C]. A portion of the ferrous pin used to lock the shrine remains inside the groove. Wilson has compared the zoomorphic pointillé interlace found on the face of the shrine to the ornamentation seen in the St. Ninian's Isle hoard, providing a stylistic connection between the shrine and Pictish art.<sup>15</sup> Robert Stevenson has also described the decoration of the shrine as Pictish in character.<sup>16</sup> The Monymusk shrine is perhaps the most widely published upon shrine of the group. While the shrine was found within Monymusk House in Aberdeenshire, David Caldwell warns that the shrine may be connected to any early medieval Insular saint.<sup>17</sup> Also held at the National Museum of Scotland is a newly acquired ridgepole, purchased by the museum in 2013. The ridgepole is constructed from cast copper alloy with remnants of gilding on both the terminals and the central decoration [Figure 15]. At the centre of the pole, a miniature shrine is depicted and further ornamented with gilt interlace. The two terminals feature beasts that bare their teeth, a feature unique to this ridgepole. As Martin Goldberg describes it, it appears as if the beasts are aggressively defending the shrine in its miniature form.<sup>18</sup>

However, not all Insular house-shaped shrines were found in Ireland and Scotland. Indeed, it is a hallmark of this category of portable shrines that they are found across Europe. Of the remaining shrines, four were found in Scandinavia, three

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<sup>15</sup> Alan Small, Charles Thomas, and David Wilson, *St. Ninian's Isle and Its Treasure*, vol. 2 (London: Oxford University Press, 1973), 128-31.

<sup>16</sup> Robert B. K. Stevenson, 'Further Notes on the Hunterston and "Tara" Brooches, Monymusk Reliquary and Blackness Bracelet', *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland* 113 (1983): 474.

<sup>17</sup> David Caldwell, 'The Monymusk Reliquary: The Breccbennach of St Columba?', *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland* 131 (2001): 278-9.

<sup>18</sup> Martin Goldberg, 'Zoomorpher Firstbalken eines hausförmigen Reliquiars unbekannter Herkunft', in *Credo: Christianisierung Europas im Mittelalter*, ed. Christoph Stiegemann, Martin Kroker and Wolfgang Walter, 2 vols., vol. 2 (Petersberg: Ihmof, 2013), 270.

at Insular monastic sites in northern Italy, and finally, four shrines have connections to southern England and northern Europe.

Of the four Scandinavian shrines, three are definitively linked to Viking graves. The Melhus shrine was discovered during the excavation of a Viking ship burial in 1907, and it is currently held in the Vitenskapsmuseet at the Norwegian University of Science and Technology in Trondheim, along with the Setnes shrine.<sup>19</sup> Over half a decade later, in May 1961, the Setnes shrine was discovered inside a Viking grave during ground levelling operations in the parish of Grytten.<sup>20</sup> Lastly, the Hokksund shrine was discovered by a metal detectorist in 2014 near the town of Hokksund, Norway. The shrine was then moved to the Museum of Cultural History at the University of Oslo, where it is currently undergoing further study.

As can be seen, these shrines have divergent forms of construction and ornamentation. The Melhus shrine [Figures 16.A-I] was constructed by attaching panels of tinned-copper-alloy to a hollowed-out box of yew wood. Portions of the gilt tubular frame can still be seen today. Three large circular mounts of repoussé copper alloy also adorn the face of the shrine [Figure 16.A]. The ridgepole, unlike those of other surviving Insular house-shaped shrines, is a composite piece of two animal-head mounts decorated in enamel, which were inserted into the wooden core of the shrine and connected by a tube of gilt copper alloy [Figure 16.I]. The locking pin still survives [Figure 16.H], as does the left suspension strap [Figure 16.C], which was decorated with both red enamel and red, white, yellow, and clear

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<sup>19</sup> Martin Blindheim, 'A House-Shaped Irish-Scots Reliquary in Bologna, and its Place Among the Other Reliquaries', *Acta Archaeologica* 55 (1984): 44-6.

<sup>20</sup> Sverre Marstrander, 'A New Norwegian Find From the Viking Period with Western European Imported Goods: Irish Reliquary and Hanging Bowl found in Romsdal', in *Lochlann: A Review of Celtic Studies*, ed. Alf Sommerfelt, vol. 3 (Oslo: Oslo University Press, 1965), 7.

*millefiori*. Next, the Setnes shrine was constructed by riveting tinned-copper-alloy panels onto a hollowed-out box of yew wood [Figures 17.A-G]. The face of the shrine is missing much of its panelling and all three of its escutcheons; the ridgepole and suspension straps are also missing, while the locking pin survives. On the back of the shrine, two of three lozenge-shaped mounts survive [Figure 17.B]. While the shrine is devoid of further decoration, small traces of red enamel were found on the corners of the lozenge mounts [Figure 17.B]. Finally, the Hokksund shrine [Figures 18.A-B] consists only of one elaborately decorated copper-alloy suspension strap and a copper-alloy panel, which is itself decorated with nine pieces of *millefiori*. Portions of enamel have been identified on both pieces.<sup>21</sup>

The final Scandinavian shrine, the Ranvaik or Copenhagen shrine, is currently housed in the Nationalmuseet in Copenhagen, Denmark [Figures 19.A-J]. The shrine entered the Danish Royal Collection of Art in 1737 and was then transferred in 1845 from the Royal Cabinet of Curiosities to the National Museum.<sup>22</sup> When donated, the shrine was said to have originally come from an unnamed Norwegian church.<sup>23</sup> The Ranvaik shrine is referred to by this name due to an inscription on the base plate in tenth-century Norse runes, which read ‘Ranvaik a kistu thasa’ (Ranvaik owns this casket) [Figure 19.E]. Four ships and a ring-chain were also incised into the base plate. Regarding the shrine’s construction, the Ranvaik shrine was assembled by riveting copper-alloy and tinned-copper-alloy plates onto a yew box. Although the glass inserts of the three medallions are missing, portions of the red enamel borders can still be seen [Figure 19.A]. The lid was

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<sup>21</sup> Bernt-Egil Tafjord, E-mail to Samuel Gerace III, March 23, 2015.

<sup>22</sup> *The Work of Angels*, 138.

<sup>23</sup> Egon Wamers, *Insularer Metallschmuck in wikingerzeitlichen Gräbern Nordeuropas: Untersuchungen zur skandinavischen Westexpansion* (Neumünster: K. Wachholtz, 1985), 105-6.

attached by two hinges on the back of the shrine, while the locking pin and large portions of the suspension straps are missing [Figures 19.C-D]. The back of the shrine is richly ornamented with panels of incised interlace and three circular mounts, each decorated with curvilinear designs [Figure 19.B]. The Ranvaik shrine currently contains relics such as unlabelled *brandae*, a piece of wood said to be the True Cross, and small portions of human bone [Figure 19.J]; however, these are not contemporary to the shrine itself.

Unlike the shrines found in Scandinavia, the following three shrines discovered in northern Italy have strong links to Insular monastic migration. The first of these shrines is the Amiata shrine, sometimes referred to as the San Salvatore shrine, which is currently held in the Museo dell'Abbazia di San Salvatore, in the Comune di Addadia San Salvatore near Mount Amiata, Italy. Fabrizio Mancinelli suggests that the shrine was carried to the abbey by Insular monks; however, it is currently undetermined how the shrine came into the care of the abbey.<sup>24</sup> During the shrine's conservation in the 1970s, it was found to contain bone fragments.<sup>25</sup> While it is ultimately unknown when the bone fragments were placed inside the shrine, Mancinelli offers the theory that the bones may have belonged to St Columbanus, as he is the only Irish saint connected with the Abbey.<sup>26</sup> The second shrine of this group is the Bobbio shrine, which is currently in the care of the Museo della città di Bobbio, Italy.<sup>27</sup> During the reconstruction of the Abbazia di San Colombano crypt in 1910, the fragments of this shrine were discovered inside a wooden box enclosed in

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<sup>24</sup> Fabrizio Mancinelli, 'Relique e Reliquiari ad Abbazia S. Salvatore', *Rendiconti della Pontificia Accademia Romana di Archeologia* 46 (1975): 134.

<sup>25</sup> *The Work of Angels*, 134.

<sup>26</sup> 'Relique e Reliquiari', 254.

<sup>27</sup> Michael Ryan, 'From Blackwater to Bobbio-A Coincidence of Shrines', *Archaeology Ireland* 16 (1991): 16-7.

one of the abbey's sarcophagi, which was further found to contain an *Agnus Dei* from the pontificate of Alexander VI (1492–1503) and other artefacts.<sup>28</sup> The fragments were sent to Rome for study and returned in 1930, whereupon they were mislaid; in 1982 Monsignor Michele Tosi found the fragments and placed them on exhibit.<sup>29</sup> The final shrine of this group is the Bologna shrine, which is currently in the care of the Museo Civico Medievale di Bologna, Italy, where 'for many years [it has been] safely lodged'.<sup>30</sup> Martin Blindheim's seminal essay on house-shaped shrine construction marked the first publication on the shrine, although he found no further reference to the shrine's provenance other than that it was donated to the museum in the eighteenth century by the Università di Bologna.<sup>31</sup>

The construction and ornamentation of the Amiata and Bobbio shrines follow similar patterns seen with the Emly and Clonmore shrines respectively, with the Bologna shrine sharing some similarities with the Ranvaik shrine. The Amiata shrine [Figures 20.A-B] was fashioned from a solid piece of yew wood, which was further decorated with a tinned-lead overlay hammered into the wooden surface, much like the previously discussed Emly shrine [Figure 9.A]. Only the left copper-alloy suspension strap survives. The Amiata shrine was further adorned with three gilt-copper medallions with red glass settings and a cast copper-alloy ridgepole with two animal-head terminals. Garnets form the eyes of these beasts, whose long curving snouts strongly resemble the 'Pictish beast' found throughout Insular art [Figure

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<sup>28</sup> 'A wooden box was discovered in a sarcophagus in the crypt', measuring 75 cm by 25 cm, which contained *ampullae* from Palestine and assorted metal and wooden objects, 'Decorated Metalwork in the Museo dell'Abbazia, Bobbio, Italy', *The Journal of the Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland* 120 (1990): 102-3.

<sup>29</sup> Michele Tosi, *Bobbio: guida storica artistica ambientale della città e dintorni* (Bobbio: Archivum Bobiense, 1983), 81-3.

<sup>30</sup> Blindheim, 'A House-Shaped Irish-Scots Reliquary', 1.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, 13-5.

21].<sup>32</sup> Next, the Bobbio shrine [Figures 22.A-D] bears a strong resemblance to the Clonmore shrine [Figure 10.A]. The Bobbio shrine was constructed entirely from tinned-copper-alloy panels, which were originally soldered together. The decoration of the shrine was executed by directly carving into the tinned panels; Conor Newman has recently noted that there may also be traces of red enamel in these incisions.<sup>33</sup> Finally, two large rock crystals were set into the lid and box of the shrine, although only the crystal on the box remains. Finally, the Bologna shrine [Figures 23.A-G] was constructed entirely from copper-alloy panels, which were held together by a metal framework. The shrine is elaborately decorated in gilding, red and white enamel, and glass ‘gemstones’; both of the suspension straps still survive [Figures 23.D-E]. Like the Ranvaik shrine, the Bologna shrine’s side and back panels are ornamented, while the back of the shrine is also decorated by three circular mounts surrounded by incised interlace [Figures 23.B-E, G]. It is the most ornate of Insular house-shaped shrines. Indeed, Isabel Henderson has compared the interlace, zoomorphic ridgepole, and placement of the gems and glass ornaments of the Bologna shrine to Pictish cross-slabs [Figure 24].<sup>34</sup>

Finally, the last four shrines of this group all exhibit a greater degree of Anglo-Saxon ornament than the previous examples and are each held in collections in London or northern Europe. First, the Moissac shrine, held in private collection in London, England, was previously discovered at the Moissac Abbey, France, where it

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<sup>32</sup> For a concise overview of the Pictish beast see, Isabel Henderson, *Pictish Monsters: Symbol, Text and Image*, H. M. Chadwick Memorial Lectures 7 (Cambridge: Department of Anglo-Saxon, Norse, and Celtic, 1996).

<sup>33</sup> ‘Examination of the Bobbio Reliquary/Chrismal’, Columbanus Life Legacy, <http://columbanus2015.eu/2013/06/28/examination-of-the-bobbio-reliquarychrismal/>, accessed March 12 2014.

<sup>34</sup> Isabel Henderson, ‘The Shape and Decoration of the Cross on Pictish Cross-slabs Carved in Relief’, in *The Age of Migrating Ideas: Early Medieval Art in Northern Britain and Ireland*, ed. Michael R. Spearman and John Higgitt (Edinburgh: National Museums Scotland, 1993), 214-5.

was held possibly from at least 1669 until 1801.<sup>35</sup> Second, the Mortain shrine was discovered in 1864 in the treasury of the La collégiale Saint-Évroult in Mortain, France, although how it came to be in France is not known. Third, the London shrine, which was purchased from K. J. Hewett Ltd. in 1954, is held by the British Museum in London. Nothing is known of its history prior to its entrance into the British Museum's collection. Unfortunately, the current location of the final shrine is unknown. Liam de Paor and Etienne Rynne first noticed the Insular style of the Brussels shrine's ornamentation in the 1950s, but its cataloguing was not undertaken until 1985 by Michael Ryan at the advice of both de Paor and Rynne.<sup>36</sup> While the Brussels shrine was present at the Cinquantenaire Museum, Brussels, Belgium in the 1980s, subsequent enquires as to the whereabouts of the shrine have produced no results.

The Moissac and Mortain shrines are of particular interest, as both have inscriptions referring to their potential functions. The Moissaic shrine was constructed by nailing gilt-copper-alloy repoussé panels onto a hollowed-out box of North European oak wood [Figures 25.A-J].<sup>37</sup> The shrine is decorated with figural, animal, and vegetal motifs; the front of the box features Christ and the four Evangelists, while the back depicts two quadrupeds that flank a chalice [Figures 25.A-B]. Although radiography [Figure 25.J] has revealed the original locking mechanism for the shrine, it does not appear that the shrine was fitted with any

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<sup>35</sup> Neil O'Donoghue, 'Insular Chrismals and House-Shaped Shrines in the Early Middle Ages', in *Insular & Anglo-Saxon Art and Thought in the Early Medieval Period*, ed. Colum Hourihane (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011), 87-9.

<sup>36</sup> Michael Ryan, 'An Insular Gilt-Bronze Object in the Royal Museums of Art and History', *Bulletin des Musées royaux d'Art et d'Histoire* 56 (1985): 57.

<sup>37</sup> Leslie Webster, 'A Recently Discovered Anglo-Carolingian Chrismatory', in *Matter of Faith: An Interdisciplinary Study of Relics and Relic Veneration in the Medieval Period*, ed. James Robinson, Lloyd de Beer, and Anna Harnden (London: British Museum, 2014), 67.



suspension straps or rings. The Anglo-Carolingian ridgepole seen on the shrine is a later, possibly tenth-century addition. The ridgepole also features an inscription: 'KA-P; BA-P; K-Σ Θ-Σ; I-Σ X-Σ; Σ-O T-P' [Figure 25.I]. Richard Camber interprets the two Latin abbreviations, 'KA-P' and 'BA-P', as referring to the terms *kapsa* and *baptismalis*, respectively. Additionally, the remaining inscriptions contain the three names of Christ: Kyrios Theo (Lord God), Iesos Christos (Jesus Christ) and Soter (Saviour).<sup>38</sup> Next, the Mortain shrine [Figures 26.A-F] was constructed by nailing repoussé gilt copper-alloy panels to a beech wood box. The cross and butterfly terminals found on the lid are later, possibly tenth-century, additions.<sup>39</sup> The face of the shrine depicts Christ flanked by the archangels Michael and Gabriel, while the Holy Spirit is depicted on the lid.<sup>40</sup> The carrying mounts consist of a metal ring held in a small tube, in contrast with the hinged clasp of house-shrines. At one point in the artefact's use, a large rectangular hole was cut into the lid of the box. The Mortain shrine also bears a Runic inscription on the back [Figure 26.B], which has been translated as 'God help Æada (who) made this *cismel*'.<sup>41</sup> While the lid of the Mortain shrine is peaked, unlike other Insular house-shaped shrines, the overall similarity of the shrine's material and construction, in particular its use of an internal locking mechanism, warrants its place within this grouping.

Lastly, the final two shrines to be introduced are highly fragmented and consist of only a few panels. The London shrine [Figure 27] comprises two silver

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<sup>38</sup> *Treasures of Heaven: Saints, Relics, and Devotion in Medieval Europe*, ed. Martina Bagnoli, et al. (London: British Museum, 2011), 118.

<sup>39</sup> *The Making of England: Anglo-Saxon Art and Culture, A.D. 600-900*, ed. Leslie Webster, Janet Backhouse, and Marion Archibald (Toronto: University of Toronto, 1991), 175.

<sup>40</sup> Maurice Cahen, Magnus Bernhard Olsen, and Celina Osieczkowska, *L'inscription runique du coffret de Mortain* (Paris: La Société de Linguistique de Paris, 1930), 55-60.

<sup>41</sup> R. I. Page, 'The Use of Double Runes in Old English Inscriptions', *The Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 61, no. 4 (1962): 906.

plates, the front panels of the lid and box of the shrine. D. M. Wilson's examination of the plates found that their edges were severely clipped and that the pattern of holes found along their edges suggested the panels were originally held in place by a frame, much like other Insular house-shaped shrines.<sup>42</sup> The ornamentation of the shrine consists of a variety of styles. The lid depicts three Trewhiddle or Jellinge style zoomorphic interlace beasts fitted into the sides and upper sections of a large X, while a small human head can be seen in the bottom portion just under a hole that may once have held a decorative mount.<sup>43</sup> The box panel depicts three large roundels, reminiscent of Anglo-Saxon disc brooches, which are themselves both filled and surrounded by triquetras. Laboratory analysis by the British Museum confirmed that the niello used to decorate the shrine was only composed of silver sulphide, placing the panels sometime before the introduction of mixed sulphide niello in the eleventh century.<sup>44</sup> Next, the Brussels shrine [Figure 28] consists of a gilt copper-alloy panel that would have served as the front lid of an Insular house-shaped shrine. While the fragment consists of only the front panel from the trapezoidal lid, the Insular decoration, its general form, and the rough edges of the fragment imply that it was secured to a wooden box.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> David M. Wilson, 'Two Silver Panels from an Anglo-Saxon Casket', *The British Museum Quarterly* 20, no. 2 (1955): 48.

<sup>43</sup> Leslie Webster, *Anglo-Saxon Art: A New History* (London: British Museum, 2012), 218.

<sup>44</sup> Wilson, 'Anglo-Saxon Casket', 50.

<sup>45</sup> Ryan, 'An Insular Gilt-Bronze Object', 59.

## **Shrines, Reliquaries and Chrismals: Shifting Terms and Scholarship**

The following section examines the terms used to denote Insular house-shaped shrines in the literature of the last two hundred years. It presents the scholarly works chronologically to highlight how shifts in terminologies correspond to shifts in perceived functions, whether the use of specific terms is directly addressed in the literature or if they are instead employed in a less critical fashion.<sup>46</sup> Terminology is a deep concern of this thesis, as how these portable shrines are denoted in modern scholarship and early medieval literature alerts us to shifting understandings of their perceived functions and meanings. In observing and critiquing these shifts in language, new questions are developed that more fully interrogate the ways in which the construction and materials of Insular house-shaped shrines relate to early medieval textual sources. As such, a literature review of these evolving terms will be presented first, followed by a discussion on the use of the term 'house-shaped shrine' in this study.

The academic literature of the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries on Insular house-shaped shrines and their possible functions was influenced by Joseph Anderson's (1880) research on the Monymusk 'reliquary' and his claim that the box was connected to the sixth-century Irish St Columba. Anderson, an archaeologist and antiquarian, suggested that because the Monymusk shrine was 'preserved' in Monymusk House—which was itself associated with Robert the Bruce

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<sup>46</sup> For discussions which focus on ornament, design, and style see, Cormac Bourke, 'The Early Irish Reliquary in Bobbio', *Archivum Bobiense: Rivista degli Archivi Storici Bobiensi* 16-17 (1994/5): 287-99; Michael Ryan, 'A House-Shaped Shrine of Probable Irish Origin at Abbadia San Salvatore, Province of Siena, Italy', in *Irish Antiquities: Essays in Memory of Joseph Raftery*, ed. Michael Ryan (Bray: Wordwell, 1998), 141-50; Blindheim, 'A House-Shaped Irish-Scots Reliquary', 1-53.

via the *vexilla* of St Columba that appeared at the Battle of Bannockburn in 1314—there was ‘reason to believe’ that the early medieval box ‘must have been’ the reliquary in question or at least a contemporary example of what the *vexilla* could have looked like.<sup>47</sup> Indeed, the term *vexilla* is somewhat fluid. Isidore of Seville’s *Etymologiae* noted that the term *vexillum* was primarily a military term used to denote a banner, ‘vexillum et ipsud signum bellicum, tractum nomen habens a veli diminutione, quasi velxillum’.<sup>48</sup> However, the late sixth-century Latin hymn *Vexilla regis prodeunt*, written by Venantius Fortunatus to honour the arrival of relics of the Passion to Queen Radegunda’s abbey near Poitiers, used the term *vexilla* to refer to the Cross and by association other relics, ‘Vexilla Regis prodeunt/fulget Crucis mysterium,/quo carne carnis conditor,/suspensus est patibulo’.<sup>49</sup> Indeed, *vexillum* was not a static term and may refer to a variety of objects, up to and including banners; moreover, there is no further evidence to suggest that the *vexilla* mentioned at the Battle of Bannockburn necessarily constituted an Insular house-shaped shrine.<sup>50</sup> Still, before Anderson, Insular house-shaped shrines appear in documentary evidence; however, there is very little active engagement with them in scholarly publications

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<sup>47</sup> Joseph Anderson, ‘Notice of an Ancient Celtic Reliquary Exhibited to the Society by Sir Archibald Grant, Bart., of Monymusk’, *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland* 14 (1879-80): 434-5.

<sup>48</sup> ‘A banner (vexillum) is also a battle-sign, having its name drawn from the diminutive of ‘sail’ (velum), as if it were velxillum’, translation in *The Etymologies of Isidore of Seville*, trans. Stephen A. Barney, et al. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 361; Isidorus Hispalensis, *Etymologiarum sive Originum*, ed. W. M. Lindsay (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1911), Book: 18, Chapter: 3, Paragraph: 5.

<sup>49</sup> ‘The banner of the Kings comes forth/Now shines forth the Mystery of the Cross/Where the Creator of the Flesh, is flesh/who was hanged on the gallows’, Venantius Fortunatus, ‘Vexilla regis prodeunt’, in *Analecta hymnica medii aevi*, ed. Clemens Blume, Guido Dreves, and\* Henry Marriott Bannister, vol. 2 (Leipzig: Fues’s Verlag (R. Reisland), 1888), 45.

<sup>50</sup> Jennifer C. Edwards, ‘Their Cross to Bear: Controversy and the Relic of the True Cross in Poitiers’, *Essays in Medieval Studies* 24, no. 1 (2007): 67-71; Caldwell, ‘The Breccbennach of St Columba’, 272-6.

save for antiquarian notices, such as with the Emly shrine in 1871.<sup>51</sup> For comparison, the Ranvaik shrine perhaps has the longest documented provenance, entering into the Danish Royal Collection of Art in 1737. Still, the Ranvaik shrine was not included in scholarly studies until the mid-nineteenth century.<sup>52</sup>

Anderson further based his theory that the Monymusk shrine was a reliquary of St Columba on a passing comparison between the Monymusk ‘reliquary’ and the Breac Maodhóg [Figure 29], an eleventh-century portable shrine associated with Drumlane, Co. Cavan in Ireland.<sup>53</sup> While archaeological information helped to inform the dates ascribed to Insular house-shaped shrines, as with Theodor Petersen’s research dating the Melhus shrine to the 650s based on its deposit in a Viking grave and its ‘Celtic’ ornamentation, the early research around Insular house-shaped shrines tended to view the shrines in isolation rather than consider the larger art-historical context.<sup>54</sup> Only after the publication of similar shrines found within rivers, lakes, and loughs in Ireland during the mid-nineteenth century does the understanding of these shrines as a group of associated objects begin to emerge. Chapter two goes into further detail on the exact histories of Insular house-shaped shrines.

The early literature employed the term *reliquary* to describe the function of Insular house-shaped shrines, citing their portable size, rich materials, and fine ornamentation in support of the term’s use. Moreover, scholars such as John Duns

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<sup>51</sup> 'Appendix: Minutes of the Academy for the Session 1871-72', *Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy. Science* 1 (1870-1874): lxiii-lxxviii.

<sup>52</sup> *The Work of Angels*, 138.

<sup>53</sup> Griffin Murray, 'A Note on the Provenance of the Breac Maodhóg', *The Journal of the Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland* 135 (2005): 136.

<sup>54</sup> Theodor Petersen, 'A Celtic Reliquary Found in a Norwegian Burial-Mound', *Det Kongelige Norske Videnskabers Selskabs Skrifter* 8 (1907): 15-9.

spoke of the form of Insular house-shaped shrines being derived from tombs, while in 1909 Anderson described them more generally as ‘architecturally-shaped’ and compared the structure of the Monymusk shrine to the Temptation of Christ page in the Book of Kells, Trinity College, Dublin, MS 58 fol. 202v [Figure 30].<sup>55</sup> Here, Anderson noted that the form of Insular house-shaped shrines was similar to the form of the Temple of Jerusalem as depicted in the Book of Kells, thereby suggesting that Insular house-shaped shrines were church-shaped, as opposed to Duns’s earlier tomb interpretation. Still, despite Anderson’s argument that the Monymusk shrine was a reliquary of St Columba, by 1924 Douglas Simpson argued there was ‘no ascertained connection either with the Culdee settlement or with the Priory of Monymusk’, an assertion later supported by both Francis Eeles (1934)—‘it is manifestly impossible to question the identification of the reliquary till recently at Monymusk Castle with the Breccbennoch’ of St Columba—and Caldwell (2001)—‘the sad conclusion must be that it will never be possible to explain what it is and where it came from’.<sup>56</sup> The antiquarian literature surrounding Insular house-shaped shrines was primarily concerned with explaining archaeological finds to a wide but highly educated antiquarian audience; thus the shrines were introduced via long description and stylistic analysis of their exteriors with little engagement of the actual construction of the shrines or exploration of alternative functions beyond that of reliquary.

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<sup>55</sup> Duns, ‘Ancient Celtic Reliquary’, 28; Joseph Anderson, ‘The Architecturally Shaped Shrines and Other Reliquaries of the Early Celtic Church in Scotland and Ireland’, *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland* 44 (1909): 259.

<sup>56</sup> W. Douglas Simpson, ‘The Augustinian Priory and Parish Church of Monymusk, Aberdeenshire’, *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland* 59 (1924-5): 38; Francis Eeles, ‘The Monymusk Reliquary or Breccbennoch of St Columba’, *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland* 68 (1933-4): 436; Caldwell, ‘The Breccbennach of St Columba’, 279.

However, by 1919, the academic debate on Insular house-shaped shrines shifted because of the research of William Conway and, in 1923, Henry Crawford. The previous academic literature discussed the function of Insular house-shaped shrines not by examining archaeological data from deposits, inscriptions, or surviving contents but by comparing their form with Continental purse-shaped reliquaries [Figures 31.A-F]. Conway produced the first cross-cultural comparison and was the first to examine these Insular shrines as a specific category of portable shrines in relation to Continental purse-shaped reliquaries and other boxes, such as the Brivio casket [Figures 32.A-C]. With respect to the function of Insular house-shaped shrines, Conway regarded them as containers for relics; indeed, he was the first to suggest that Insular house-shaped shrines were a response to Continental portable shrines, although he further proposed that the form of Insular house-shaped shrines, due to their 2:1 proportions, was ultimately derived from sarcophagi.<sup>57</sup> Conway's work is limited, as he did not consider other functions or contents for Insular house-shaped shrines, focusing instead on their exterior elements and their relation to Continental relic containers. While Conway looked outwards to the Continent, Crawford turned the academic gaze back on the Insular house-shaped shrines themselves, examining them in relation to other Insular reliquaries and relics.<sup>58</sup> Crawford's catalogue of Irish reliquaries helped to situate Insular house-shaped shrines within a more localised context, however, the functions and possible contents of Insular house-shaped shrines were not as thoroughly examined as Crawford's analysis of crosiers and bell-shrines, whose presence in medieval texts

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<sup>57</sup> William Conway, 'Portable Reliquaries of the Early Medieval Period', *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of London* 31 (1919): 238-40.

<sup>58</sup> Henry Crawford, 'A Descriptive List of Irish Shrines and Reliquaries. Part I-II', *The Journal of the Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland Sixth Series*, 13 (1923): 82-88.

was more explicit than Insular house-shaped shrines, as will be discussed further in chapter one.

While the above methodologies reflect the scarce information available to early researchers, the uncritical use of the term *reliquary* to describe the function of Insular house-shaped shrines was not confined to the early twentieth-century literature, although it has at times been challenged.

The next major shift in the literature surrounding Insular house-shaped shrines occurred in 1934 due to Erika von Erhardt-Siebold's research on a seventh-century Anglo-Saxon poem written by Aldhelm, bishop of Sherborne.<sup>59</sup> The fifty-fifth riddle in Aldhelm's *Ænigmata* describes an object, or a chrismal as indicated by the poem's title, which is fitted with gems and metal bosses, 'Et licet exterius rutilent de corpore gemmae/Aurea dum fulvis flavescit bulla metallis'.<sup>60</sup> Furthermore, Aldhelm describes how the chrismal can only be opened by removing its 'roof': 'Valvas sed nullus reserat nec limina pandit, Culmina ni fuerint aulis sublata quaternis'.<sup>61</sup> Von Erhardt-Siebold observed not only that Aldhelm's vivid description of the chrismal matched the general construction of Insular house-shaped shrines, but also that an Anglo-Saxon shrine discovered in Mortain, France bore an inscription that referred to the container as a chrismal. Von Erhardt-Siebold then applied the term *chrismal* to Insular house-shaped shrines and offered extensive footnotes detailing the use of the term *chrismal* in Continental and Insular liturgy and

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<sup>59</sup> The complete riddle is discussed in chapter one.

<sup>60</sup> 'And granted, there are precious stones glowing red on the outside of my body while a golden boss shines with precious metalwork', Aldhelmus Scireburnensis, *Ænigmata*, ed. M. De Marco and F. Gloria, vol. 133, Corpus Christianorum Series Latina (Turnhout: Brepols Publishers, 1968), Enigma: 55, Verse: 1.

<sup>61</sup> 'But no-one unlocks my doors nor opens out my abode unless the roof is lifted up from my four corners', *ibid.*, Enigma: 55, Verse: 2-3.



hagiography. Unlike previous scholars' conceptualisations of the shrines as reliquaries, von Erhardt-Siebold's research on the term *chrismal* demonstrated that such containers would have held a variety of materials, from the previously assumed relics to the Eucharist and chrism oil.<sup>62</sup> While von Erhardt-Siebold introduced a valuable new term into the academic debate, she did not include other notable contemporary Latin and Old Irish terms for similar containers, thus providing an incomplete picture as to the variety of functions and terms available to possibly denote Insular house-shaped shrines.

Still, von Erhardt-Siebold's shift in terminology was not taken on by other scholars. In 1941, Joseph Raftery's second volume of *Christian Art in Ancient Ireland* continued to describe Insular house-shaped shrines as reliquaries.<sup>63</sup> Additionally, after the sale of the Emly shrine to the Boston Museum of Fine Art in the 1950s, Georg Swarzenski published an article detailing the museum's new acquisition and described the shrine thus,

The object, a small reliquary of essentially religious nature, is of course a rare document of Anglo-Irish art and civilization, and there is today a popular claim that such works, for their national interest involved, should be treasured alone in the representative collections of the native country which are, indeed, and always will be, the particular and unrivaled domain of the arts in this field.<sup>64</sup>

Swarzenski refers to the shrine as a reliquary despite its unknown provenance and its lack of contents, while further imparting to the reader the cultural importance of the shrine both in its 'native field' and by extension to the greater Boston community, which has historically been an endpoint of the Irish diaspora.<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>62</sup> Erika Von Erhardt-Siebold, 'Aldhelm's Chrismal', *Speculum* 3 (1935): 276-7.

<sup>63</sup> Adolf Mahr and Joseph Raftery, *Christian Art in Ancient Ireland* (New York: Hacker Art Books, 1976), 106-15.

<sup>64</sup> Swarzenski, 'Anglo-Irish Potable Shrine', 50.

<sup>65</sup> For more on the provenance of the Emly shrine see chapter two.

Furthermore, Swarzenski is concerned primarily with the ornamentation of the Emly shrine and its connections to other Insular pieces. While the establishment of these connections is an important element necessary to our understanding of Insular house-shaped shrines, Swarzenski does this through ignoring the constructional differences between Insular house-shaped shrines and other Continental shrines, such as the purse-shaped reliquary, ‘Actually, the difference between what is customarily termed a “house-shaped” and a “bag- or purse-shaped” reliquary is not too substantial. Momentous, however, is the different artistic spirit of the insular works, and, indeed, it is the significant style which defines our shrines’.<sup>66</sup> However, the ‘bag- or purse-shaped’ reliquaries Swarzenski mentions as seemingly analogous to house-shaped shrines were constructed in a significantly different manner from their Insular counterparts; namely, Insular house-shaped shrines were constructed to open from the top, while Continental purse-shaped or bursa-shaped shrines were designed to be opened via a sliding panel, enclosing their contents inside cavities carved into the bottom or sides of the shrine. Scholars have since examined these two means of access and have noted not only that they produce unique haptic responses from the viewer, but also that Insular house-shaped shrines could be more readily opened than purse-shaped shrines could be, suggesting that their contents required more direct access.<sup>67</sup>

In Blindheim’s seminal work ‘A House-Shaped Irish-Scots Reliquary in Bologna’ (1984), the term *reliquary* appears again, ‘their very small size undoubtedly depends on the use of these reliquaries. They were not, as a rule,

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<sup>66</sup> Swarzenski, ‘Anglo-Irish Potable Shrine’, 55.

<sup>67</sup> Victor H. Elbern, ‘Chrimale und Tragaltar. Eine neue liturgiegeschichtliche Analyse des Beinkastens St. Liudgers von Werden’, *Das Münster* 64 (2011): 148-51.

stationary in churches or chapels—they were the personal property of monks out on long or short journeys. The monk carried his reliquary from a cord around his neck'.<sup>68</sup> Although Blindheim does not cite any particular source for this information, he is most likely drawing on Insular hagiographies, penitentials, and histories. One such source may be Bede's *Historia ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum*, which describes how the missionary St Germanys carried relics around his neck in a *capsulam*: 'lateri suo capsulam cum sanctorum reliquiis collo'.<sup>69</sup> Blindheim does not address other early medieval terms used to describe portable containers for sacral matter, but his article updates the known grouping of Insular house-shaped shrines for the first time since the 1950s. Furthermore, Blindheim's work begins to question the movement of Insular house-shaped shrines across continental Europe and into Northern Italy. Thus, Blindheim is like Swarzenski in that he is primarily concerned with how Insular house-shaped shrines are stylistically connected both to one another and to the greater context of Insular art. Furthermore, Blindheim focuses only on shrines of Irish or Scottish provenance and does not consider Anglo-Saxon shrines, which were included by previous scholars such as von Erhardt-Siebold.

Insular house-shaped shrines continued to be described as reliquaries in the 1989 catalogue *'The Work of Angels': Masterpieces of Celtic Metalwork*, likely due to the term's wide use in both academic and popular literature.<sup>70</sup> However, in 1990,

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<sup>68</sup> Blindheim, 'A House-Shaped Irish-Scots Reliquary', 3.

<sup>69</sup> 'A casket with relics of saints carried around his neck', Bede Venerabilis, *Historia ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum*, ed. Bertram Colgrave and R. A. B. Mynors, vol. 1375, Clavis Patrum Latinorum (Turnhout: Brepols Publishers, 1969), Book: 1, Chapter: 18, Paragraph: 1, Page: 178, Line: 8.

<sup>70</sup> While the Amiata, Monymusk, Lough Erne (A and B), Ranvaik, and Bologna shrines are placed under the category of 'house-shaped shrines', they are still described as reliquaries, *'The Work of Angels'*, 128-40.

Ó Floinn returned to the question of the function of Insular house-shaped shrines in his article on the Clonard shrine.

Ó Floinn specifically compares the structure of the Insular house-shaped shrine to the Old Irish *meinistir*—a portable container used by Insular ecclesiastics to carry relics, sanctified oils, and the Eucharist—which appears in the *Vita Secuda* and the *Vita Tertia* of St Patrick, the Book of Leinster, and Life of St Molaisse of Devenish. As Ó Floinn notes, accounts suggest ‘that it [the *meinistir*] was portable, worn around the neck, made of bronze, hollow and provided with rings or medallions. The only known object type of seventh century date which would agree with this description is a house-shaped shrine’.<sup>71</sup> However, Ó Floinn does not pursue this academic debate further, and by 1994 he was continuing to refer to Insular house-shaped shrines as reliquaries in popular literature.<sup>72</sup> Furthermore, Ó Floinn continues to advance Conway’s interpretation of the structure of Insular house-shaped shrines as derived from sarcophagi rather than from Insular architecture. While Ó Floinn notes that the average proportions of Insular house-shaped shrines are similar to some sarcophagi, he does not examine individual shrines, tombs, composite shrines, or Insular architecture for other possible sources of the Insular house-shaped shrine form.

A more successful shift in critically employed terminology occurred after Leslie Webster’s description of the Mortain shrine in *The Making of England: Anglo-Saxon Art and Culture, AD 600–900* (1991). Webster employs von Erhardt-Siebold’s use of the term *chrismal* to explain the function of the Mortain shrine, although

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<sup>71</sup> Ó Floinn, ‘House-Shaped Shrine from Clonard’, 54.

<sup>72</sup> Ó Floinn, *Irish Shrines and Reliquaries of the Middle Ages* (Dublin: National Museum of Ireland, 1994), 14.

Webster primarily uses the Eucharistic connotation of *chrismal*.<sup>73</sup> By 1993, John Soderberg too integrates the term *chrismal* into his analysis of the Bologna shrine.<sup>74</sup> Soderberg remarks on this issue in one of the earliest critiques of Blindheim's work, stating that house-shaped shrines 'have traditionally been called 'reliquaries', even though none actually contains a relic'.<sup>75</sup> However, the Amiata and Ranvaik shrines, known to Soderberg as they were published in Blindheim's original paper, did contain relics. While the Ranvaik shrine's relics likely came from a later period, as suggested by the seventeenth-century epigraphy found on some of the surviving labels, Mancinelli suggests that the knucklebone found with the Amiata shrine may have been original, although Mancinelli does not provide sufficient evidence for this reasoning.<sup>76</sup> Even so, both containers were eventually used to house relics. Rather than discuss either shrine, Soderberg here ignores these deviations in favour of creating an artificial appearance of universal function by questioning the 'reliquary' status of the shrines collectively rather than individually. Over the course of his paper, Soderberg offers *chrismal* as an alternative descriptive of Insular house-shaped shrines, suggesting that the Bologna shrine, the focus of Blindheim's 1984 paper, was not a reliquary but a container for the Eucharist. However, Soderberg's argument further breaks down in his conclusion, when he acknowledges that the term *chrismal* is itself problematic, as it could denote a container for either chrism oil, relics, or the Eucharist. Thus, one of the earliest and most direct critiques of

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<sup>73</sup> *The Making of England*, 175-6.

<sup>74</sup> John Soderberg, 'A Lost Cultural Exchange: Reconsidering the Bologna Shrine's Origin and Use', *Proceedings of the Harvard Celtic Colloquium* 113 (1993): 160.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*, 156.

<sup>76</sup> Mancinelli, 'Relique e Reliquiari', 254; Martin Blindheim, 'The Ranvaik Reliquary in Copenhagen—A Short Study', in *Proceedings of the Tenth Viking Congress: Larkollen, Norway, 1985*, ed. James E. Knirk and Charlotte Blindheim (Oslo: Universitets Oldsaksamling, 1987), 203.

Blindheim shifts between different terms and does not engage with how these multiple terms themselves shape our understanding of Insular house-shaped shrines and other early medieval religious containers.

Additionally, this shift in terminology still was not universally employed, as studies by Michael Ryan (1990) and Cormac Bourke (1995) continued to describe the Bobbio and Clonmore shrines as reliquaries.<sup>77</sup> However, by the 2000s, scholars again questioned the appropriateness of terms such as *chrismal* and *reliquary*. In 2005, Victor Elbern questioned the function of both Insular and Continental shrines, arguing that many of them were chrismals, specifically employed during baptismal rites.<sup>78</sup> Elbern cites Aldhelm's riddle as evidence that Insular house-shaped shrines carried the Eucharist; however, he does not acknowledge von Erhardt-Siebold's extensive notes regarding the multiple connotations of the term *chrismal* in Insular and Continental sources. Indeed, Elbern focuses on liturgy and penitentials and does not adequately balance these sources with hagiographies, letters, and histories, which tend to employ a greater variety of terms for containers of sacred materials. The baptismal connection was further advanced with the public display of the Moissac shrine, an Anglo-Saxon house-shaped shrine discovered in Moissac, France, in 2006.<sup>79</sup> Like the Mortain shrine, the Moissac shrine was inscribed with short Latin abbreviations—'KA-P' and 'BA-P'—which Camber interprets as referring to the terms *kapsa* and *baptismalis* respectively.<sup>80</sup>

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<sup>77</sup> Ó Floinn, 'House-Shaped Shrine from Clonard', 53-4; Ryan, 'Metalwork in the Museo dell'Abbazia', 108; Cormac Bourke, 'Further Notes on the Clonmore Shrine', *Seanchas Ardmhacha: Journal of the Armagh Diocesan Historical Society* 16, no. 2 (1995): 27-8.

<sup>78</sup> Victor H. Elbern, 'Baptizatus et confirmatus: ein neuer Beitrag zum frühmittelalterlichen Chrismale', *Archiv für Liturgiewissenschaft* 47 (2005): 34-43.

<sup>79</sup> *Art of the Middle Ages*, (London: Sam Fogg, 2007), 16.

<sup>80</sup> James Robinson, 'Chrismatory', in *Treasures of Heaven: Saints, Relics, and Devotion in Medieval Europe*, ed. Martina Bagnoli, et al. (London: British Museum, 2011), 118.

In 2011, Neil O'Donoghue revived interest in Insular house-shaped shrines and further argued that they were Eucharistic chrismals, basing his argument on the term's appearance in Insular liturgy and penitentials as well as on the Mortain shrine.<sup>81</sup> O'Donoghue did not consider alternative terms nor the impact of Tomás Ó Carragáin's (2003, 2007, 2011) research on medieval Irish architecture and relics, which in many ways revives the work of C. A. R. Radford (1977), who argued that the structure of Insular house-shaped shrines could have been derived from early medieval wooden churches.<sup>82</sup> Dieter Quast's *Das merowingerzeitliche Reliquienkästchen aus Ennabeuren* (2012) takes a more balanced approach; however, there is subsequently less emphasis on relics in his analysis.<sup>83</sup> Finally, Webster's 2014 study of the Moissac shrine notes that while it may be possible to determine the function of some Insular shrines, applying either *reliquary* or *chrismal* to every Insular shrine is problematic.<sup>84</sup> Over the course of three centuries, academics have continued to debate the appropriate terminology for Insular house-shaped shrines.

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<sup>81</sup> O'Donoghue, 'Insular Chrismals and House-Shaped Shrines', 84-5.

<sup>82</sup> See, Tomás Ó Carragáin, 'The Architectural Setting of the Cult of Relics in Early Medieval Ireland', *The Journal of the Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland* 133 (2003): 130-76; 'Skeuomorphs and Spolia: The Presence of the Past in Irish Pre-Romanesque Architecture', in *Making and Meaning in Insular Art*, ed. Rachel Moss (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2007), 95-109; *Churches in Early Medieval Ireland: Architecture, Ritual and Memory* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010); C. A. Radford, 'The Earliest Irish Churches', *Ulster Journal of Archaeology* 40 (1977): 1-11.

<sup>83</sup> Dieter Quast, *Das merowingerzeitliche Reliquienkästchen aus Ennabeuren* (Mainz: Schnell & Steiner, 2012), 60-5.

<sup>84</sup> Webster, 'Anglo-Carolingian Chrismatory', 70-3.

## ‘Shrine’: A Useful Term?

As seen in the above literature review, scholars have previously referred to Insular house-shaped shrines variously as house-shaped, church-shaped, sarcophagi-shaped, or tomb-shaped.<sup>85</sup> Moreover, the terms *house-shaped* and *church-shaped* have also been applied to artefacts, such as the twelfth-century shrine Breac Maodhóg, despite dissimilarities in its construction which separate it from the hip-roofed house-shrines of this study.<sup>86</sup> For clarity, this study only uses the compound term *Insular house-shaped shrine* to refer to the twenty-four shrines and shrine fragments that form the core of this study. The term *house-shaped shrine* is only used to denote a container that is small, rectangular, constructed with a hinged lid that is trapezoidal in shape—often described as a hip-roof—and which may have also been fitted with suspension straps or rings and a locking mechanism for securing the lid of the shrine to the box. Furthermore, this study’s use of the term *house-shaped* is specifically informed by Aldhelm’s riddle, which uses the terms *domus* and *templum* to describe the chrismal. While this study ultimately argues that the terms *domus* and *templum* are specifically related to conceptualisations of the heavenly and earthly Temple and ecclesiastical architecture, by referring to Insular house-shaped shrines as *house-shaped*, this study emphasises the connection between Insular house-shaped shrines and other architecturally shaped containers such as tombs, composite shrines,

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<sup>85</sup> Murphy, 'On a Shrine Lately Found in Lough Erne', 291; Anderson, 'Architecturally Shaped Shrines', 259; Blindheim, 'A House-Shaped Irish-Scots Reliquary', 2.

<sup>86</sup> The Breac Maedhóg neither opens from the top, was constructed with a hip-roof, nor utilises any locking mechanism. Margaret Stokes, *On Two Works of Ancient Irish Art Known as the Breac Moedog (or Shrine of St. Moedog) and the Soiscel Molaise (or Gospel of St. Molaise)* (London: J. B. Nichols and Sons, 1871), 9.



and sarcophagi, while also utilising the English equivalent to Aldhelm's use of *domus* in his riddle on the chrismal.

As this discussion of Insular house-shaped shrines is primarily concerned with their functions, the terms *chrismal* and *reliquary* are insufficient to convey the multiple use-lives Insular house-shaped shrines may have had and the paucity of original contents found inside Insular house-shaped shrines. Moreover, the Old Irish term *scrín* or shrine appears in various genres of Insular literature, as do other Latin and Old Irish terms such as *capsa*, *chrismal*, *reliquarium*, *minister*, and *capsella*. The choice to utilise the term *shrine* is informed not only by the use of a similar term in Insular sources but also by the term's association with relics, the Eucharist, or chrism oil, thus allowing all possible contents to be simultaneously considered without the need to switch terms. Still, the above list of terms is by no means exhaustive, and the complexity surrounding their use, only touched upon here, is more fully examined in the first chapter of this study. Indeed, the archaeological term *portable shrine* is a sufficiently fluid contemporary term. Not only does the term portable shrine serve to acknowledge the ease in which Insular house-shaped shrines may have been transported short or long distances, but the term also works well with the appearance of Insular house-shaped shrines across Europe.<sup>87</sup>

The term portable shrine is sufficiently nuanced in its connotations, as a portable shrine may contain a variety of materials, while the term shrine itself has not been as deeply used in scholarly works to explicitly denote one type of function over another, as is the case with the terms reliquary and chrismal. This is not to say that scholars have not used the term shrine to infer an association between a container

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<sup>87</sup> Julia Smith, 'Portable Christianity: Relics in the Medieval West (c. 700-1200)', *Proceedings of the British Academy* 181 (2012): 151-7.

and saintly relics. Robert Stevick uses the term shrine to denote the metalwork containers used to house early medieval relic hand-bells, while Swarzenski's uses the term shrine as essentially a synonym for reliquary.<sup>88</sup> Additionally, it is important to highlight that the term shrine also is used by scholars such as Rachel Koopmans and Erika Zwierlein-Diehl to denote architecturally shaped containers or monuments used to hold the corporeal relics of saints.<sup>89</sup> Similarly, scholars such as Madeleine Gray employ the term shrine to refer to physical buildings as seen in her research on Welsh poetry and well-shrines in Penrhys, Wales.<sup>90</sup> While the term shrine may refer to any of the above artefacts and architecture, the use of the term shrine in this thesis is more in line with Henry Crawford's definition,

shrines are usually decorated boxes or caskets of wood and metal, or of metal alone, and are in most cases connected with the founders or patrons of the churches to which they originally belonged. They are of two main types, viz., those made to enclose portions of a saint's body, and those intended to preserve some article closely associated with him or used in his ministrations.<sup>91</sup>

Here Crawford deftly acknowledges the plurality of available contents of Insular shrines.

Similarly, Crawford's use of the term shrine further aligns it with the compound term portable shrine, which denotes a container of variable dimensions; indeed, it is the *portable* of portable shrine that alerts the reader that the shrine is not a physical building, but rather something that could be moved, carried, or worn.

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<sup>88</sup> Robert D. Stevick, 'St Patrick's Bell Shrine: Form and Layout of the Plates', *The Journal of the Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland* 138 (2008): 26-7; Swarzenski, 'Anglo-Irish Potable Shrine', 51.

<sup>89</sup> Rachel Koopmans, 'Visions, Reliquaries, and the Image of "Becket's Shrine" in the Miracle Windows of Canterbury Cathedral', *Gesta* 54, no. 1 (2015): 51-7; Erika Zwierlein-Diehl, "'Interpretado Christiana": Gems Shrine of the Three Kings in Cologne', *Studies in the History of Art, Symposium Papers XXXII: Engraved Gems: Survivals and Revivals* 54 (1997): 62-5.

<sup>90</sup> Madeleine Gray, 'Sacred Space and the Natural World: The Holy Well and Shrine of the Virgin Mary at Penrhys', *European Review of History—Revue européenne d'histoire* 18, no. 2 (2011): 251-55.

<sup>91</sup> Crawford, 'A Descriptive List of Irish Shrines', 74.

While Anderson used the term shrine to imply that Insular house-shaped shrines contained relics, so too is the term used by him to suggest that the containers themselves were relics due to their assumed association with medieval saints, ‘architecturally shaped shrines of the Early Celtic Church in Scotland and Ireland....form a class of relics of most singular interest, alike in their intrinsic character and features, and in their historical significance and associations’.<sup>92</sup> In comparison, Ó Floinn also employs the term shrine to refer to this group of Insular artefacts, while also acknowledging that these containers may have carried sanctified oils, the eucharist, and relics.<sup>93</sup> Thus, this study uses the term *shrine* as an abbreviation of portable shrine while also allowing for the plurality of contents noted in Crawford’s definition, while also acknowledging the term’s association with the Old Irish term *scrín*, which will be more fully explored in the first chapter.

## Questions, Parameters, and Methodologies

This thesis questions the terms used to denote Insular house-shaped shrines, what the shrines may have originally contained, and how their ornamentation and materiality relates to other modes of containment of sacral matter, from contemporary shrines to Insular churches to even the heavenly Jerusalem. To answer these questions, the thesis first examines inscriptions on Insular and Continental shrines so as to give a more grounded approach to the early medieval terms for portable sacral containers. Next, the provenances of Insular house-shaped shrines are outlined and questioned to further contextualise how the shrines functioned in the

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<sup>92</sup> Anderson, 'Architecturally Shaped Shrines', 259.

<sup>93</sup> Ó Floinn, 'House-Shaped Shrine from Clonard', 53-4.

modern period, while further questioning potential areas of origin or interaction for the shrines. Then, the construction, materials, and ornament of Insular house-shaped shrines are examined in order to ascertain how they relate to other forms of Insular and Continental enshrinement and containment of sacral matter, thereby highlighting the specific mechanical means by which Insular house-shaped shrines operate, while also questioning the significance of the predominantly anionic ornament of the shrines. Lastly, by exploring the slippage between the terms ‘house’, ‘church’, and ‘temple’ and their Latin equivalents, this thesis examines the connection between Insular house-shaped shrines and contemporary ecclesiastical architecture and architectural motifs.

In examining various aspects of the construction and materials of Insular house-shaped shrines, such as decorative ridgepoles, hinged-hip roof lids, and the layout of decorative lugs, enamel, glass, and stones, this thesis will present a panoptic study of these Insular portable shrines by interrogating them through the lens of contemporary textual sources, along with the theories of materiality and the performance of material culture, in order to more fully construct how early medieval peoples would have viewed and interacted with these portable shrines. Through these examinations, the place of Insular house-shaped shrines within early medieval art, both Continental and Insular, is more fully delineated, while a working definition of Insular house-shaped shrines is developed. This thesis shows that Insular house-shaped shrines are best understood as containers used for various forms of sacral matter, which likely were understood as relics themselves only in later periods, and

which modern antiquarians later used as meaning-making devices in their writings on the spread of the early medieval ‘Celtic’ Church.<sup>94</sup>

The above questions are informed and enhanced through the physical examination of a representative sample of Insular house-shaped shrines that were permitted to be studied off display, which include the Clonard, Clonmore, London, Lough Erne (A-B), Melhus, Monymusk, Mortain, Ravaik, Setnes, and Shannon shrines, as well as fragments from the National Museum of Scotland, the National Museum of Ireland, and the Ulster Museum. Supplementing these examinations, the Bobbio, Bologna, Emly, and Moissac shrines were studied while on display. In order to answer the questions of this thesis, the evidence gathered through the physical examinations of Insular house-shaped shrines is compared to the ways in which Insular and early medieval sources such as Aldhelm’s *Ænigmata*, Bede’s *Historia ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum*, Alcuin of York’s *epistolae*, handbooks of penance such as the Penitential of Cummean, and Insular liturgy and hagiography from approximately the sixth to tenth centuries refer to portable shrines, their materials, and contents. Using the physical elements of the shrines and the theories of materiality and performativity, this thesis questions the function, use, and reception of Insular house-shaped portable shrines and as such will present a more holistic view of this enigmatic group than is present in previous studies.

Many of the surviving Insular house-shaped shrines were found outside of strong archaeological contexts and lacked contents when they were discovered.<sup>95</sup> While Insular house-shaped shrines have all been dated from approximately the seventh- to tenth-centuries, there is still much debate as to where each shrine might

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<sup>94</sup> Anderson, 'Architecturally Shaped Shrines', 259-81.

<sup>95</sup> See chapter two for more information on the provenances of Insular house-shaped shrine.

fall within a chronological timeline. Complicating this timeline, many of these dates are based on early twentieth-century research, which saw the Insular house-shaped shrine's La Tène motifs as indicative of a seventh-century date.<sup>96</sup> This is perhaps best seen with Petersen's dating of the Melhus shrine, 'the simpleness and its construction and ancient character of the decoration give the shrine a stamp of antiquity, and if the total absence of later ornament motifs is not quite accidental, there should perhaps be good reason for assigning it a date not later than about A.D. 650'.<sup>97</sup> Petersen, Conway, and even Blindheim regard the variance of style in house-shaped shrines as indicative of periods of production rather than questioning the socio-economic pressures which may have influenced house-shaped shrine production. Tastes, the abilities of artisans, and availability of materials are all potential variables that did indeed influence the construction of house-shaped shrines.<sup>98</sup>

This study considers the seventh to tenth centuries as the primary period of Insular house-shaped shrine construction, while also bearing in mind comparative materials from the fifth to thirteenth centuries to help place Insular house-shaped shrines within a wider context. The function of Insular house-shaped shrines and their relation to Insular art—that is to say, the art produced after the Roman occupation of Britain between the fifth and eleventh centuries—is a key concern of this study.<sup>99</sup> Insular art embodies the transformation of Celtic art in later centuries by

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<sup>96</sup> La Tène motifs, sometimes referred to as Celtic, denote the use of spirals, curvilinear designs, S-scrolls, lyre, trumpet, and vegetal shapes. This ornamentation was used throughout the European Iron Age, flourishing between from 500 BCE to 100 CE in the major Celtic tribes, finally peaking in the Ultimate La Tène style of the seventh century.

<sup>97</sup> Petersen, 'Reliquary Found in a Norwegian Burial-Mound', 17.

<sup>98</sup> For more on the problems of dating through stylistic analysis see, Nancy Netzer, 'Style: A History of Uses and Abuses in the Study of Insular Art', in *Pattern and Purpose in Insular Art*, ed. Mark Redknap, et al. (Oxford: Oxbow, 2001), 169-77; Michael Ryan, 'Metalwork in Ireland from the Later Seventh to the Ninth Century: A Review', in *Insular & Anglo-Saxon Art and Thought in the Early Medieval Period*, ed. Colum Hourihane (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011), 43-58.

<sup>99</sup> Catherine E. Karkov, *The Art of Anglo-Saxon England* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2011), 3.

representing the merging of Celtic curvilinear designs, Germanic animal style, Roman and Irish interlace traditions, figural representations, Christian iconography, and Pictish motifs such as bosses and naturally observed animals. Much like the art style which lends its name to the Insular house-shaped shrine, Insular house-shaped shrines themselves present a multivalent and multifaceted response to both local and Continental structures, motifs, and religious and social needs.

In order to ascertain the function of Insular house-shaped shrines and report fully on their cultural complexity, it is necessary to draw on both close visual examinations of the shrines and close readings of Insular literature from several genres, including hagiographies, riddles, poems, letters, hymns, homilies, histories and penitentials. Previously, whether examining the exterior ornamentation of shrines or the terms historically associated with them, scholars have examined shrines in isolation from wider cultural concerns. This study begins to address that oversight by combining an examination of the materials and construction of the shrines with wider cultural questions, drawing inspiration from the methodologies of Bruno Latour's Actor-Network theory, Alfred Gell's *Technologies of Enchantment*, G. J. C. Snoek's research on the interplay between relics and the Eucharist from the late antique to the early modern periods, Caroline Bynum's philosophical essay on Christian materiality, and Talal Asad's postcolonial critique of early Christian worship.<sup>100</sup> Rather than only examine Insular house-shaped shrines from one

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<sup>100</sup> For more on these methodologies see, Bruno Latour, 'The Berlin Key or How to do Words with Things', in *Matter, Materiality and Modern Culture*, ed. P. M. Graves-Brown (London: Routledge, 2000), 10-21; Caroline Walker Bynum, *Christian Materiality: An Essay on Religion in Late Medieval Europe* (New York: Zone Books, 2011); Talal Asad, *Genealogies of Religion* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993); Godefridus J. C. Snoek, *Medieval Piety from Relics to the Eucharist: A Process of Mutual Interaction* (Leiden: Brill, 1995); Alfred Gell, *Art and Agency: An Anthropological Theory* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998).

discipline's angle, this study is more interdisciplinary than previous publications have been.

The methodologies of Latour, Gell, Snoek, Bynum, and Asad influence how the research and findings of this thesis are conceptualised. Beginning with Latour, his 'symmetrical anthropology' blurs the boundary between human, object, and society.<sup>101</sup> Latour seeks to address how human life is not simply social but is composed of 'actors' intertwined in an ever-changing network.<sup>102</sup> Latour argues, 'to speak of 'humans' and 'non-humans' allows only a rough approximation that still borrows from modern philosophy the stupefying idea that there exist humans and non-humans, whereas there are only trajectories and dispatches, paths and trails'.<sup>103</sup> One such 'actor' Latour uses to explain how objects can mediate relationships and thereby take on active roles is a unique key form found in Berlin, Germany. The Berlin key is a lever-type lock key that has two key tips, one on each end; to lock a door with this key, the key must be pushed through the keyhole and retrieved on the other side. Thus, the lock is designed to hold the key until the gate or door is re-locked. Central to Latour's above statement is the issue of agency, which specifically includes non-human 'actors' who are able to influence the behaviour of other 'actors'. Thus, the Berlin key, a unique key used to access garden doors in Berlin, is not simply a passive product of a material culture but is instead part of a subcategory of objects, in this case keys, which actively shape and sustain a mode of interaction and cultural identity intimately connected to its location of origin. This theoretical approach works well with Insular house-shaped shrines, which were themselves

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<sup>101</sup> Bruno Latour, *Reassembling the Social* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 63-86.

<sup>102</sup> Bruno. Latour, 'On Actor-network Theory. A Few Clarifications Plus More Than a Few Complications', *Soziale welt* 47, no. 4 (1996): 381.

<sup>103</sup> Latour, 'The Berlin Key', 12.



possibly produced over a period of three centuries and are found in various places in Ireland, Britain, and Europe, many at or near locations with connections to Insular monastic communities. In considering Latour's Berlin key, this thesis approaches Insular house-shaped shrines as active 'actors' that directly influence how audiences were able to interact physically with them, thereby creating a specific cultural understanding of the objects that is based on their mechanical functions, which in turn may have been selected purposely over the centuries by their creators to sustain a specific mode of interaction. Thus, the construction, materials, and form of Insular house-shaped shrines can be seen to reflect as well as sustain traditions of engagement and understanding, both cultural and physical, while also linking the shrines, despite their distances, to the British Isles.

Next, as this thesis conceptualises Insular house-shaped shrines as products and sustainers of material culture, Gell's 'attitude of the spectator' in his anthropology of art is of similar importance. Gell writes,

the work of art is inherently social in a way in which the merely beautiful or mysterious object is not: it is a physical entity which mediates between two beings, and therefore creates a social relation between them, which in turn provides a channel for further social relations and influences.<sup>104</sup>

While discussing fifteenth-century Carmelite reliquaries, Gell notes the fluid position of relic, reliquary, and church, as each, in turn, contains a portion of sacral matter, albeit to greater degrees in each instance, through the 'insertion of animating relics', one of the possible contents of Insular house-shaped shrines.<sup>105</sup> As Insular house-shaped shrines are containers for sacral matter, their ability to mediate and channel social relations is important to consider due to the ability of their contents to

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<sup>104</sup> Alfred Gell, *The Art of Anthropology: Essays and Diagrams* (London: Athlone Press, 1999), 172-3.

<sup>105</sup> *Art and Agency: An Anthropological Theory*, 142-3.

transform their containers into a type of holy object through their prolonged contact with their contents. Indeed, this effect did not necessarily need to come from relics alone, as the studies by Snoek and Bynum on late antique medieval relics, chrism, and the Eucharist suggest that the boundaries between sacral materials were permeable, with much of the delineation happening in the late medieval period.<sup>106</sup> As such, various forms of sacral matter could have an ‘animating effect’ on their containers. Snoek and Bynum further discuss how the delineation between container and sacral contents—which could include relics, blessed items, sanctified bread, wine, soil, oil, and wax from holy sites, and various other types of materials—often collapsed, especially in cases where the materials and ornament of shrines related to the nature of their contents.<sup>107</sup> Keeping in mind Snoek’s and Bynum’s work, as most if not all house-shaped shrines lack their original contents, in many cases firm archaeological contexts, and have ambiguous use-lives, the physical construction, materials, and ornament of Insular house-shaped shrines thus provides a potential window through which to examine their possible functions and symbolic significances.

Finally, as a view of the entire use-lives of Insular house-shaped shrines is occluded due to fragmentary evidence, it is important to note the possibility that some Insular house-shaped shrines were originally used or constructed as containers of secular items. However, the work of Tala Asad offers a means by which to

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<sup>106</sup> See, Snoek, *Medieval Piety from Relics to the Eucharist*, 65-226; Bynum, *Christian Materiality*.

<sup>107</sup> For more on the intermingling of relic and container see, Caroline Walker and Paula Gerson Bynum, 'Body-Part Reliquaries and Body Parts in the Middle Ages', *Gesta* 36 (1997): 3-7; Cynthia Hahn, 'The Voices of Saints: Speaking Reliquaries', *Gesta* 36 (1997): 20-31.

consider the permeable boundary between religious and secular powers, peoples, and objects in the early medieval period. Asad notes,

Religious ‘symbols’—whether one thinks of them in terms of communication or of cognition, of guiding action or of expressing emotion—cannot be understood independently from their relations with non-religious ‘symbols’ or of their articulation of social life in which work and power are always crucial...religious symbols are intimately linked to social life (and so change with it).<sup>108</sup>

By comparing monastic rules and the concept of *disciplina*, Asad argues that medieval Christianity was deeply performative and founded on action and physical and emotional engagement.<sup>109</sup> As such, even if some Insular house-shaped shrines were produced or used for what would be considered now as secular functions or items, it is important to note that the ornamentation of the shrines may still reflect the periods’ approaches to Christian motifs, as first suggested by Stevenson in regards to the ornamentation of the Monymusk shrine.<sup>110</sup> Thus, viewing the ornamentation and materiality of Insular house-shaped shrines as reflections of Christian traditions of ornamentation and display is not out of bounds even if the containers themselves were not exclusively used to house sacral matter, as the containers arose from a culture that incorporated Christian themes into a variety of ‘secular’ objects such as sword chapes, while objects such as the Moissac shrine explicitly use Christian iconography and an inscription noting a specific religious function for the container.<sup>111</sup> This is not to say that all objects within the pre-modern period were imbued with a deep religious meaning or function, but rather as elite objects Insular house-shaped shrines would have been just as likely to adopt Christian motifs and

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<sup>108</sup> Talal Asad, ‘Anthropological Conceptions of Religion: Reflections on Geertz’, *Man* 18 (1983): 251.

<sup>109</sup> *Genealogies of Religion*, 136.

<sup>110</sup> Stevenson, ‘Further Notes’, 473-4.

<sup>111</sup> These topics are discussed in more depth in chapters four and one respectively.

messages as brooches; objects not assigned to a singular religious purpose could still serve spiritual functions and needs in the lives of their owners and viewers.<sup>112</sup>

While the materials and ornament of Insular house-shaped shrines are well-documented, no analysis has yet examined the overall patterns of materials and ornament used in the construction of Insular house-shaped shrines nor the interaction between their materials and their ornament. As Insular house-shaped shrines are primarily devoid of contents and not explicitly or categorically attested to in textual sources, the materials and construction of the shrines themselves offer promising areas of research; this is made even more relevant when viewing them through the lens of materiality, which is discussed in greater depth in chapter four. Therefore, Insular house-shaped shrines are treated as both representing Insular conceptualisations of containers for sacral matter—generally defined as objects and materials that are blessed or considered holy—and participating in the spread of both these ideas and the shrines themselves over the British Isles and Continental Europe.

## Chapter Summaries

Having outlined the general issues and the basic definitions examined in this work, it is now necessary to consider the manner in which the thesis and its evidence have been ordered and structured. The discussion of the function of Insular house-shaped shrines opens with an examination of terminology presented in sources contemporary with Insular house-shaped shrines. Using the seminal work of von

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<sup>112</sup> For more on hidden, possibly apotropaic, motifs and designs see, Alice Blackwell, 'The Iconography of the Hunterston Brooch and Related Medieval Material', *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland* 141 (2011): 231-48; Stevenson, 'Further Notes', 469-77.

Erhardt-Siebold on the chrismal and other Latin terms for portable shrines combined with Ó Floinn's research on similar Irish terms as an initial point of enquiry, this chapter branches out to utilise the large collections of Latin and Irish sources present in the *Corpus Christianorum Series Latina*, Migne's *Patrologia Latina*, and the Electronic Dictionary of the Irish Language in order to locate references to the terms used to denote containers of sacral matter in order to determine how containers of sacral matter are described and what they were said to contain. This is then compared with the inscriptions on Insular house-shaped shrines and larger patterns found in Continental and Mediterranean inscriptions on sacral containers.

Next, this study examines the find locations of the shrines and addresses questions of their possible origins by examining their contexts of their discoveries. This examination considers the impact of other artefacts found with Insular house-shaped shrines, along with later additions and significant repairs, to address more fully the use-life of the shrine.

Following this examination, the thesis addresses the physical construction of Insular house-shaped shrines and examines the high level of uniformity found within this group, while also questioning some deviations presented by the Anglo-Saxon examples. Furthermore, the structure of Insular house-shaped shrines is compared with other Insular and non-Insular sacral containers so as to more fully address how the construction of Insular house-shaped shrines impacts their function.

Having established the terms used to refer to sacral containers in Insular sources, the provenances of Insular house-shaped shrines, and their construction, the thesis then turns its focus to the materials and ornament of Insular house-shaped shrines. Traditional art historical examinations of iconography are unable to address

fully the aniconic nature of Insular house-shaped shrine ornamentation. Given this, in order to more fully understand the wider cultural context for how the materials and ornamentations of Insular house-shaped shrines would have been received by contemporary audiences, this portion of the thesis examines Insular and comparative exegetical sources, such as the Penitential of Egbert, Bede's Commentary on Revelation, the homilies of Gregory the Great, the presence of materials and motifs in the *Vitae sanctorum hiberniae*, and the Life of Columba.

Finally, the discussion of the function of Insular house-shaped shrines examines the structure of the shrines and their relation to conceptualisations of the Church and the Temple of Jerusalem during the seventh to tenth centuries. This chapter accomplishes this task by drawing on the rich research surrounding manuscripts, early medieval architecture, and related Insular artefacts such as the composite stone shrine of Jedburgh. The argument that a relationship exists between Insular house-shaped shrines and Churches is further supported by examining depictions of Insular house-shaped shrines within Insular art. Finally, this study questions how Insular house-shaped shrines may have been carried or worn and explores the religious or spiritual meaning this practice may have carried.



# Chapter 1

## Chrismals, Caskets, and Capsules: Terms, Texts, and the Physical Evidence

In 1935, Erika von Erhardt-Siebold published her analysis of Aldhelm's *Ænigmata* vis-à-vis an inscription found on the Mortain shrine. Many scholars still believe that the *Ænigmata* offers the most detailed description of the appearance of a chrismal.<sup>113</sup> However, the connection between the Mortain shrine's inscription and Aldhelm's riddle is more complicated than it at first appears. The Mortain shrine's inscription is widely thought to include a term, *ciismel*, that translates as *chrismal*, but the original inscription can be translated and understood in several ways. Moreover, copies of Aldhelm's *Ænigmata* did not always include the original glosses, so some medieval audiences may have read Aldhelm's riddle and arrived at different solutions.<sup>114</sup> While the container Aldhelm describes correlates strongly with Insular house-shaped shrines, the name of the riddle's subject—the chrismal—and the inscriptions found on Insular house-shaped shrines do not match each other well enough to justify a total identification of the two. Furthermore, inscriptions on Insular house-shaped shrines include terms that allow for a wider variety of functions beyond the explicitly Eucharistic.

In order to understand the functions of, original contents of, and terminology used for Insular house-shaped shrines, this chapter performs a long-overdue

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<sup>113</sup> Webster, 'Anglo-Carolingian Chrismatory', 70; Elbern, 'Baptizatus et confirmatus', 27-8; O'Donoghue, 'Insular Chrismals and House-Shaped Shrines', 88-91.

<sup>114</sup> Benjamin Weber, 'The Isidorian Context of Aldhelm's "Lorica" and Exeter Riddle 35', *Neophilologus* 96, no. 3 (2012): 464.



examination of Aldhelm's riddle on the chrismal through a consideration of Insular and Continental inscriptions. In addition to comparing Aldhelm's chrismal with inscriptions on Insular house-shaped shrines, I also investigate a wider range of contemporary Insular and Continental shrines and artefacts, as well as primary Insular and Continental written sources, such as hagiographies and penitentials, to gain a fuller context for analysing the terminology and function of Insular house-shaped shrines. This analysis demonstrates that chrismals could contain relics, the Eucharist, and chrism oil, while the *capsa*, *scrín*, and *meinistir* were equally suited to carry any form of sacral matter, with relics being mentioned more explicitly. Indeed, any one of these terms could serve as the answer to Aldhelm's riddle, and all are applicable to Insular house-shaped shrines, suggesting that Insular house-shaped shrines would have been understood as containers for sacral matter in general rather than as containers for specific and unchanging contents.

## **In Search of Aldhelm's *Chrismal***

The seventh-century *Ænigmata* of Aldhelm, abbot of Malmesbury Abbey and bishop of Sherborne, England, challenges the reader to answer a collection of one hundred hexametrical enigmas written in Latin verse. Aldhelm's riddle on the chrismal was not an individual piece; rather, it was part of a much larger work, the *Epistola ad Acircium*.<sup>115</sup> The *Acircius* to whom Aldhelm addressed his letter may have been King Aldfrith of Northumbria, and the epistle itself is divided into several sections. The *Ænigmata*, which contains his riddle on the chrismal, is only one of

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<sup>115</sup> Andy Orchard, *The Poetic Art of Aldhelm* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 6-7.

five; the rest comprises *De septenario* (an allegorical discussion of the number seven), *De Metris* (a treatise on metre), *De Pedum Regulis* (a second treatise on metre), and an *Allocutio excusativa* addressing King Aldfrith and comparing Aldhelm's role with Vergil's.<sup>116</sup> This reference to King Aldfrith would date the *Epistola ad Acircium*, and thus Aldhelm's *Ænigmata*, from sometime between 685–695 CE.<sup>117</sup> In writing his riddles, Aldhelm followed the example of Symphosius, a late-antique Latin poet of unknown origin whose own influential *Ænigmata* included the solution along with the riddle.<sup>118</sup> However, copies of Aldhelm's *Ænigmata* did not always include the original glosses, as seen with the ninth-century Badische Landesbibliothek Karlsruhe, MS Aug. perg. 85, fol. 18v [Figure 33]. Of specific interest is the fifty-fifth riddle on the chrismal, a container shaped like a building or church, which was used to hold some form of sacral matter,

Alma domus veneror divino munere plena,  
valvas sed nullus reserat nec limina pandit,  
culmina ni fuerint aulis sublata quaternis,  
et licet exterius rutilent de corpore gemmae,  
aurea dum fulvis flavescit bulla metallis,  
sed tamen uberius ditantur viscera crassa  
intus, qua species flagrat pulcherrima christi:  
candida sanctarum sic floret gloria rerum,  
nec trabis in templo, surgunt nec tecta columnis.<sup>119</sup>

<sup>116</sup> Aldhelm: *The Poetic Works*, trans. Michael and James Rosier Lapidge (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1985), 10.

<sup>117</sup> Mercedes Salvador-Bello, 'Allegorizing and Moralizing Zoology in Aldhelm's Enigmata', *Revista Canaria de Estudios Ingleses* 68 (2014): 209-11.

<sup>118</sup> P. D. Scott, 'Rhetorical and Symbolic Ambiguity: The Riddles of Symphosius and Aldhelm', in *Saints, Scholars and Heroes: Studies in Medieval Culture in Honour of Charles W. Jones*, ed. Margot H. King and Wesley M. Stevens, vol. 1 (Collegeville: Hill Monastic Manuscript Library, 1979), 117-20.

<sup>119</sup> I am revered as a nourishing house, filled with a divine gift.  
But no-one unlocks my doors nor opens out my abode  
unless the roof is lifted up from my four corners.  
And granted, there are precious stones glowing red on the outside of my body,  
while a golden boss shines with precious metalwork,  
but nevertheless within more abundantly enriched is my crude viscera,  
which blazes with the more beautiful species of Christ:  
thus I am filled with these shining holy things.  
In this temple the roof does not rise from beams of columns.

Notable similarities between Aldhelm's chrismal and Insular house-shaped shrines appear in the riddle: the chrismal is shaped like a house (*domus*) or church (*templum*), it is decorated with metalwork (*bullae metallis*) and gems (*gemmae*), and its lid or 'roof' must be moved in order to gain access to its contents (*culmina ni fuerint aulis sublata quaternis*).<sup>120</sup> The contents of the chrismal are alluded to only as a divine gift (*divino menere plena*) or the *species Christi*. However, because the glosses to the riddles did not always appear in subsequent copies of the text, some medieval audiences may have read Aldhelm's riddle and arrived at terms divergent from but analogous to *chrismal*.<sup>121</sup> To understand these complexities, we must return to the physical evidence and examine what terms are explicitly associated with Insular house-shaped shrines. While textual sources provide the necessary context for terminology surrounding portable shrines, inscriptions offer perhaps the most explicit association of terms as their application is direct, physical, and permanent.

Accounting for the poetic lens of Aldhelm's riddles, his chrismal does explicitly describe an object constructed from metal, decorated with bosses (*aurea dum fulvis flauescit bullae metallis*), and opened by moving its roof (*culmina ni fuerint aulis sublata quaternis*). All known Insular house-shaped shrines were constructed from either wood decorated with metalwork or entirely from metal panels; only five of the eighteen shrines show evidence of having been constructed entirely from metal panels.<sup>122</sup> Moreover, only twelve of the eighteen surviving

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Translation based in part on Lapidge, Rosier, and von Erhardt-Siebold's translations and notes, *Aldhelm: The Poetic Works*, 81; Von Erhardt-Siebold, 'Aldhelm's Chrismal', 278; Aldhelmus Scireburnensis, *Aenigmata*, 133, (CPL 1335) Aenigma: 55.

<sup>120</sup> The connection between Insular house-shaped shrines and church architecture is discussed more in chapter five.

<sup>121</sup> For more on the glosses associated with Aldhelm's work see, Nancy P. Stork, *Through a Gloss Darkly: Aldhelm's Riddles in the British Library MS Royal 12.C.xxiii* (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1990).

<sup>122</sup> These being the Bologna, Bobbio, Clonmore, Lough Erne (B), and Shannon shrines.

shrines show evidence that they were decorated with metallic bosses as alluded to by Aldhelm, while the Mortain shrine is only ornamented with gilt repoussé panels. One description, however, is seen universally across the Insular house-shaped shrines: all surviving Insular house-shaped shrine lids were attached with hinges and fitted with an internal locking mechanism, which is in agreement with Aldhelm's description of the chrismal's moveable 'roof'.

When taking the overall evidence into account, the Mortain shrine appears physically similar to Aldhelm's chrismal. Still, the inscription found on the Mortain shrine, which is widely thought to use the term *chrismal*, may either be a generic Old English term for a box, or it may perhaps be a term specifically associated with sacral matter, albeit one that is not necessarily singular in its contents. The runes forming the inscription are cut directly into the back roof-plate, where raised mouldings divided them into six sections [Figure 26.B].<sup>123</sup> The inscription reads

‘XFFH / M / ΓCMFFHFT / ÞIIFHMKI / M / MMΓXMPFR / FHTE,’

which Raymond Page transcribes as ‘Good helpe: Æadan þiiodnr ciismeel gewarahtæ’.<sup>124</sup> While the overall formula of the inscription has been accepted by some scholars, that is ‘God help Aedan who made this’, the term *ciismeel* has been subjected to some debate.<sup>125</sup> As Page notes, *ciismeel* is an hapax legomenon, appearing nowhere else in Old English. However, four possible interpretations of *ciismeel* are possible: 1) the Medieval Latin *crismal(e)* or 2) *chrismarium*, terms

<sup>123</sup> For a more in-depth discussion of the provenances of the Mortain, Ranvaik, and Moissac shrines see chapter two.

<sup>124</sup> Leslie Webster, Janet Backhouse, and D. H. Turner, *The Golden Age of Anglo-Saxon Art 966 to 1066* (London: British Museum, 1984), 176.

<sup>125</sup> Early examinations of the Mortain shrine noted this issue; however later examinations post Fink and Page do not question the inscription's translation as closely. See Cahen, *L'inscription runique*; Webster, *Anglo-Saxon Art: A New History*, 190.



translated as ‘Ranvaik [possibly a female name] owns this casket’.<sup>128</sup> Unlike the Mortain shrine’s inscription, the inscription of the Ranvaik shrine is rough and etched into the shrine along with four ship prows, thereby suggesting that the inscription was added after the shrine was taken to Norway, possibly having been stolen by Vikings and personalised by later, perhaps non-Christian, owners. Due to the inscription’s potential connection to Vikings via Norse runes, its use of the term *kistu* may appear at first as unconnected to the concerns of this chapter and due instead to the shrine’s possible displacement from a Christian context. However, the Moissac shrine’s inscription informs us that more generic Latin terms, such as *capsa*, literally translated as a box, casket, or purse, were also associated with Insular house-shaped shrines.

Next, Webster interprets the two Latin abbreviations found on the Moissac shrine’s ridgepole, ‘KA-P’ and ‘BA-P’, as referring to the terms *kapsa* and *baptismalis*, respectively, while Greek letters, K-Σ Θ-Σ, I-Σ X-Σ, and Σ-O T-P, are used to spell three names of Christ: Kyrios Theo (Lord God), Iesos Christos (Jesus Christ) and Soter (Saviour) [Figure 25.I].<sup>129</sup> The ridgepole may be a later addition, suggesting various possibilities from a desire to transform the casket into a container with a new purpose—in this case for use in baptism—to a simple repair.<sup>130</sup> Webster refers to the Moissac shrine as a chrismal, citing Aldhelm’s riddle, yet the term that appears on the shrine, *kapsa*, is a more general Latin word for a container, not *chrismal*.

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<sup>128</sup> Blindheim, ‘The Ranuaik Reliquary’, 203.

<sup>129</sup> Webster, ‘Anglo-Carolingian Chrismatory’, 69.

<sup>130</sup> Ibid., 72.

For comparison, the possible baptismal function of an Insular container is alluded to in an inscription found on the Gandersheim shrine, which was found in 1863 by George Stephens in the treasury of Gandersheim Abbey, Bad Gandersheim, Germany [Figures 34.A-G]. The Gandersheim shrine is highly divergent from Insular house-shaped shrines; it is constructed from a unique material, bone; it has an external as opposed to internal locking mechanism; it has no suspension fittings; and it is disproportionally taller than all other house-shaped shrines. However, its inscription and Insular provenance merit its inclusion as a comparative container for sacral items.

While the Gandersheim shrine has been dated from the eighth century and ascribed an Anglo-Saxon provenance by Wilson, it is not presently known how the casket came to Gandersheim.<sup>131</sup> Gandersheim Abbey was founded by Duke Liudolf of Saxony and is part of the present town of Bad Gandersheim in Lower Saxony, Germany; a church was built there in 856, and in 881 it was dedicated to SS Anastasius, Innocent, and John the Baptist. The abbey continued to attract elite attention, and in 877 King Louis the Younger granted the abbey imperial protection; in 919, Henry I extended this to imperial immediacy, a privilege under German feudal law that placed the abbey under the direct authority of the Emperor, thus giving the abbey partial independence.<sup>132</sup> The abbey continued to be an important seat of Ottonian power into the tenth century, primarily due to the presence of

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<sup>131</sup> David M. Wilson, *Anglo-Saxon Art: From the Seventh Century to the Norman Conquest* (Woodstock: Overlook, 1984), 64-7.

<sup>132</sup> Otto Perst, 'Die Kaisertochter Sophie, Äbtissin von Gandersheim und Essen (975-1039)', *Braunschweigisches Jahrbuch* 38 (1957): 5-10; Jay T. Lees, 'David rex fidelis? Otto the Great, the *Gesta Ottonis*, and the *Primordia coenobii Gandeshemensis*', in *A Companion to Hrotsvit of Gandersheim (fl. 960)*, ed. Phyllis Rugg Brown (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 201-11.

familial graves within the abbey.<sup>133</sup> In 1863, George Stephens recorded the shrine's provenance,

the shrine now holds a couple of unimportant relics, but Senator Culemann pronounces these to be, as it was natural to expect, of far later date, perhaps from the 13<sup>th</sup> century. He also informs me that no memorandum exists in the Ducal Museum as to whence this remarkable box came, or when it was obtained, but he thinks it might have possibly been acquired by the Duchess Gertrud, mother of Henry the Lion, when in France purchast relics to the value of one hundred pounds of silver.<sup>134</sup>

The shrine was formally transferred from the abbey during its secularisation in 1815 and moved to the collection at Brunswick.<sup>135</sup> August Fink suggests an early transfer of the shrine to Gandersheim, while Stephens cites local tradition linking the shrine to Gertrude of Süpplingenburg, which could be due to the thirteenth-century relics that were once inside the shrine.<sup>136</sup> In either case, the antiquarian history of the shrine cannot be traced beyond 1815 with any surety. At the very least, the shrine was being used to hold relics until the nineteenth century, showing how containers for sacral matter could have multiple use-lives, even if it is not known when these relics were placed inside the shrine.

The base of the Gandersheim casket [Figure 34.E] bears a runic inscription carved into the copper-alloy frame:

long side A: '??|T+M+|||+HJ?F||+M??'

long side B: '?? |T+M+||| +HJ?F||+M??'

short side C: '?F||+F||+M'

short side D: '?F||+F||+M'.

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<sup>133</sup> Ludger Körntgen, 'Gandersheim und die Ottonen', in *Das Gandersheimer Runenkästchen: Internationales Kolloquium*, ed. Regine Marth (Braunschweig: Herzog Anton Ulrich-Braunschweig, 2000), 134-37.

<sup>134</sup> George Stephens, 'On an Ancient Runic Casket Now Preserved in the Ducal Museum, Brunswick', *The Journal of the Kilkenny and South-East of Ireland Archaeological Society* 4, no. 2 (1863): 267-8.

<sup>135</sup> Gabriele Waxenberger, 'The Problematic Inscription on the Brunswick Casket: Research Summary', in *Pforzen und Bergakker: neue Untersuchungen zu Runeninschriften*, ed. Gabriele Waxenberger and Alfred Bammesberger (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1999), 216-7.

<sup>136</sup> August Fink, 'Zum Gandersheimer Runenkästchen', in *Karolingische und ottonische Kunst: Werden, Wesen, Wirkung*, ed. Hermann Schnitzler (Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner, 1957), 277-8; Simon Keynes, *King Athelstan's Books* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 147-8.



Tineke Looijenga and Theo Vennemann transcribe this inscription as,

‘c/uri[s]tneþiisi[n] [nomine] s[ancti]† (=Iesu Christi) (sig)hīrælinmc/u\*\*| hælīg

(† =chrism) æliea,’ and translate it as, ‘I baptise you in the sign of the cross/in the

name of Christ. I write (on) you the sign of the cross (with) chrism. Sick (men’s) oil

(in the name of Christ). Holy oil, chrism, water’.<sup>137</sup> Looijenga and Vennemann note

that the inscription suggests the casket was constructed to contain chrism oil, while

Webster suggests that it may have contained the Eucharist due to the shrine’s

similarity to the Mortain shrine.<sup>138</sup> Both Fink and Page note that the bottom frame

containing the runic inscription is likely a nineteenth-century renovation.<sup>139</sup>

Looijenga and Vennemann argue that the sophistication of the Old English indicates

it was copied, possibly from a now-lost original.<sup>140</sup> Unfortunately, the inscription

refers only to the box’s possible functions and contents, not to what the box itself

was called, while the metal base panel may be a later, if not modern, addition.

Previous scholars such as Neil O’Donoghue and Victor Elbern have primarily confined their research to terms such as *meinistir* and *chrismal*; however, as seen with the Moissac, Ranvaik, and potentially the Mortain shrine as well, *chrismal*, with its multiple denotations, was not the only term found inscribed on Insular house-shaped shrines.<sup>141</sup> While Aldhelm does not produce a riddle for the *capsa*, its direct

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<sup>137</sup> Looijenga and Vennemann argue that the ‘star-runes’ which surround the inscription symbolise Christ, the sign of the cross, and/or chrism, Tineke Looijenga and Theo Vennemann, ‘The Runic Inscription of the Gandersheimer Kästchen’, in *Das Gandersheimer Runenkästchen: Internationales Kolloquium*, ed. Regine Marth (Braunschweig: Herzog-Anton-Ulrich-Museum, 2000), 111, 16.

<sup>138</sup> Leslie Webster, ‘Style and Function of the Gandersheim Casket’, in *Das Gandersheimer Runenkästchen: Internationales Kolloquium*, ed. Regine Marth (Braunschweig: Herzog-Anton-Ulrich-Museum, 2000), 71.

<sup>139</sup> Fink, ‘Zum Gandersheimer Runenkästchen’, 277-8; *The Making of England*, 178.

<sup>140</sup> Looijenga and Vennemann, ‘Runic Inscription of the Gandersheimer Kästchen’, 111-2.

<sup>141</sup> O’Donoghue, ‘Insular Chrismals and House-Shaped Shrines’, 82-86; Elbern, ‘Baptizatus et confirmatus’, 34-43.

link to Insular house-shaped shrines has not been adequately addressed by the current literature, and the term *capsa* appears across Insular sources as containers for both sacral and secular materials.

### **Saints and *Capsae*: Inscriptions on Continental and Insular Shrines**

Insular house-shaped shrines did not arise unconnected from wider European engagements with the containment and display of sacral matter.<sup>142</sup> This chapter draws on the comparative methodologies of Conway and Quast, who have previously focused more on the forms of portable shrines, to go beyond the current literature and examine the inscriptions on shrines contemporary with the construction and use of Insular house-shaped shrines—in other words, shrines dated between the seventh and twelfth centuries.<sup>143</sup> The examination in this and the following section will help contextualise the inscriptions on Insular house-shaped shrines to allow for a better understanding of the terminology directly applied to portable shrines and the functions and contents those terms imply. As an exhaustive study of surviving early medieval shrines exceeds the scope of this thesis, I focus my examination on shrines with possible monastic or political Insular connections in modern day France, Germany, and Switzerland, due to their geographic proximity and political, economic, and ecclesiastical connections with Britain and Ireland.<sup>144</sup> I selected the following shrines from the wider body of both inscribed and uninscribed shrines due

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<sup>142</sup> Lisa M Bitel, *Isle of the Saints: Monastic Settlement and Christian Community in Early Ireland* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1990), 222-34.

<sup>143</sup> Conway, 'Portable Reliquaries', 218-40; Quast, *Reliquienkästchen aus Ennabeuren*.

<sup>144</sup> For more on these topics see, Charles Doherty, 'Exchange and Trade in Early Medieval Ireland', *The Journal of the Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland* 110 (1980): 67-89; Joseph Paul Fuhrmann and E. A. Lowe, *Irish Medieval Monasteries on the Continent* (Washington: Catholic University of America, 1927).

to their similarity in construction to Insular house-shaped shrines; their proximity to points of Insular monastic contact; and their inscriptions, which refer either to saints or donors of the shrines. A link already exists between inscribed Insular house-shaped shrines and locations in modern day France and Germany, as seen with the find-spots of the inscribed Moissac and Mortain shrines, which further supports this methodological framework.

Inscriptions offer a glimpse into the use-lives of an object, as they help to demarcate points of function by listing the donors of the artefact, noting the saints the shrine was dedicated to, and, in some rare cases, explicitly referring to the container itself.<sup>145</sup> In this third case, such inscriptions provide contemporary terms explicitly connected with the shrine, thus allowing for a more focused search of analogues in textual sources. Inscriptions that proclaim power or ownership suggest that the materials, form, and ornamentation of a container were not always sufficient to communicate their intended functions and associations.<sup>146</sup>

One portable shrine, commonly referred to as the Mumma shrine, offers an important comparison for contextualising the inscriptions on Insular shrines. The shrine was discovered under the main altar of l'Abbaye de Fleury, Saint-Benoît-sur-Loire, France in 1642.<sup>147</sup> The Mumma shrine [Figures 35.A-C] is connected to the Insular world through the abbey's original foundation and some stylistic elements

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<sup>145</sup> *Use-life* is an archaeological term referring to the functions and uses of artefacts from their creation to their final deposit, loss, or destruction. For more on use-life in its relation to Celtic art see Duncan Garrow and Chris Gosden, *Technologies of Enchantment? Exploring Celtic Art: 400 B.C. to A.D. 100* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012).

<sup>146</sup> Robert Coates-Stephens, 'Epigraphy as Spolia—The Reuse of Inscriptions in Early Medieval Buildings', *Papers of the British School at Rome* 70 (2002): 291-96.

<sup>147</sup> Jean Taralon and Roseline Devallon, *Treasures of the Churches of France* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1966), 285.

found on the shrine.<sup>148</sup> The original abbey at Saint-Benoît-sur-Loire was founded around 630–40 under the monastic models of St Benedict of Nursia and the Irish St Columbanus. It included two churches dedicated to St Peter and the Blessed Virgin.<sup>149</sup> By c. 660, the presiding abbot Mommulus commissioned a priest, Aiulf, to gather relics of St Benedict from the abbey of Monte Cassino.<sup>150</sup> Thus scholars date the Mumma shrine from the seventh century based primarily on its iconography and the reference to Mumma found in a short inscription on the back of the shrine [Figure 35.B]: ‘MUMMAFIERIIUSSITIAMORESCEMARIEETS/CI PETRI,’ or ‘Mumma ordered this made in love for St Mary and St Peter’.<sup>151</sup>

In regards to the construction of the Mumma shrine, Périn and Feffer note that two small holes found on the sides of the shrine may have once held a suspension fitting, allowing the shrine to be worn or hung [Figure 35.C].<sup>152</sup> For comparison, fifteen of the eighteen surviving Insular house-shaped shrines were fitted with suspension straps or rings that would have allowed them to be suspended or worn.<sup>153</sup> However, unlike Insular house-shaped shrines, the Mumma shrine does not feature a removable lid. Instead, a small cavity was carved into the bottom of the shrine and then covered with a wooden panel decorated with a sheet of copper alloy.

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<sup>148</sup> Lisa Brundle, 'The Body on Display: Exploring the Role and Use of Figurines in Early Anglo-Saxon England', *Journal of Social Archaeology* 12 (2013): 212.

<sup>149</sup> The current abbey dates from the eleventh century, *Recueil des chartes de l'abbaye de Saint-Benoît-sur-Loire*, ed. Maurice Prou and Alexandre Vidier, vol. 2 (Paris: A. Picard et Fils, 1900–37), 115.

<sup>150</sup> Conway, 'Portable Reliquaries', 223; Philippe George, 'Les reliques des saints. Publications récentes et perspectives nouvelles (II)', *Revue belge de philologie et d'histoire* 82, no. 4 (2004): 1046.

<sup>151</sup> Quast, *Reliquienkästchen aus Ennabeuren*, 112; Taralon and Devallon, *Treasures of the Churches of France*, 285; Patrick Périn and Laure-Charlotte Feffer, *La Neustrie: les pays au nord de la Loire de Dagobert à Charles le Chauve* (Rouen: Musées et monuments départementaux de Seine-Maritime, 1985), 142.

<sup>152</sup> *La Neustrie*, 142.

<sup>153</sup> The surviving panels in Brussels and London are only the faces of the shrines, thus counting against the verified number above; the Moissac shrine does not feature any suspension hinges or rings. O'Donoghue, 'Insular Chrismals and House-Shaped Shrines', 91; Ryan, 'An Insular Gilt-Bronze Object', 57–60; Wilson, 'Anglo-Saxon Casket', 47–50.

The Mumma shrine was likely a portable shrine that was eventually removed from wider use and given a second or continued life as a stationary container placed underneath the altar. This type of deposit suggests that at the time of its interment the shrine contained or was associated with relics and was interred underneath the altar as a means of sanctifying the space.<sup>154</sup>

The inscription on the shrine records that Mummulus or Mumma had the shrine constructed for the love (*amore*) of the Virgin Mary and St Peter. There is no indication in the inscription that the shrine was intended for other saints, nor does the dedication offer further insights into who Mumma may have been. Yitzhak Hen argues that the shrine predates the transfer of St Benedict's relics in the late seventh century because such an important saint would have been included in the inscription found on the shrine.<sup>155</sup> However, the dedication of the Mumma shrine to the Virgin and St Peter also mirrors inscriptions on other Continental shrines and likely represents the spread and importance of the two universal saints rather than serving as a complete list of the shrine's contents.<sup>156</sup> A similar type of inscription is found on a small seventh- to eighth-century purse-shaped shrine of unknown origin acquired by the Musée de Cluny in 1900 [Figures 36.A-B]. The face of the Cluny shrine

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<sup>154</sup> The deposit of relics underneath altars is a practice originally seen in late-antique Christianity that was further popularised through papal and Carolingian reform in the ninth century, See Patrick Geary, 'Sacred Commodities: The Circulation of Medieval Relics', in *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective*, ed. Arjun Appadurai (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 169-91.

<sup>155</sup> Yitzhak Hen, 'Gender and the Patronage of Culture in Merovingian Gaul', in *Gender in the Early Medieval World*, ed. Leslie Brubaker and Julia Smith (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 221.

<sup>156</sup> Cynthia Hahn, 'What Do Reliquaries Do for Relics?', *Numen: International Review for the History of Religions* 57, no. 3/4 (2010): 284-8; Scott B. Montgomery, 'Mittite capud meum...ad matrem meam ut osculetur eum: The Form and Meaning of the Reliquary Bust of Saint Just', *Gesta* 36 (1997): 48-52; Smith, 'Portable Christianity', 143-67.

depicts the Madonna flanked by SS Peter and Paul, while above, three inscriptions read, 'PETRO', 'PAUL', and, above Mary and Christ, 'MARIAETXPSE'.<sup>157</sup>

Although the Mumma shrine's inscription does not refer to other saints, the 'roof' on the shrine's face depicts the upper bodies of six figures above ten interlaced circles enclosing five marigold patterns and five crosses. These figures are repeated on the back of the shrine, although the lower box section is plain apart from the inscription. Lastly, a figure in an *orans* pose is depicted on the bottom section of the surviving side panel of the shrine [Figure 35.C]. While the lack of specific iconography makes it difficult to determine who each of these figures may be, their presence suggests that the shrine was designed to communicate its connection to a multitude of persons, perhaps saintly and earthly, and that these figures could represent various saints, apostles, angels, and perhaps the donor.

As with the Mortain shrine, no specific term appears on the Mumma shrine that could be used to classify the container. Still, both the Mortain and Mumma shrines list their donors and link the shrines to specific saints; the Mortain shrine includes depictions and identifying inscriptions of both SS Michael and Gabriel, while the Mumma shrine lists St Peter and the Virgin. Additionally, the translation of 'Mumma' could also refer to a woman named in the charters of the abbey of Weissembourg.<sup>158</sup> While this could mean the abbot Mommulus did not commission the shrine, this would not significantly alter the shrine's dating, and Hen acknowledges that the abbot Mommulus is a more plausible option. Overall, the inscription on the Mumma shrine informs the viewer that the shrine functioned as a pious gift, while the brief mention of the two saints on the shrine, its iconography,

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<sup>157</sup> Quast, *Reliquienkästchen aus Ennabeuren*, 123.

<sup>158</sup> Hen, 'Gender and the Patronage of Culture', 221.

and its deposit further link the shrine to the cult of relics. Although the inscription on the Mumma shrine does not explicitly refer to its contents, the references to St Peter and the Virgin do mirror more explicit inscriptions found on other Continental shrines.

The earliest possible record of the seventh-century Warnebertus shrine, held in the treasury of the Canonical Foundation of Saint Michael *Beromünster*, Switzerland [Figures 37.A-D], appears in a fifteenth-century handwritten list of items on the back page of a thirteenth-century gospel book from the Canonical Foundation.<sup>159</sup> The list, compiled by a Johannes Dörflinger, gives a *cista* and the names of the Virgin Mary and St Peter; however, the shrine did not receive its first scholarly publication, by Joseph Aebi, until 1869.<sup>160</sup> The high altar of the Church of St Michael was burned down in 1223 during hostilities with the Hapsburgs, so it is highly likely that if the shrine was transported to the church and is the *cista* mentioned in the list, it would have arrived sometime between 1233 and 1498, the year Johannes Dörflinger died.<sup>161</sup> I chose this shrine for this chapter not only because it explicitly refers to relics, but also because its construction is exceedingly similar to other Insular house-shaped shrines. Like the Bobbio, Bologna, and Clonmore shrines, the hinged roof of the Warnebertus shrine is attached with finger-joints that run across the shrine's back [Figure 37.B]. In addition, the Warnebertus

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<sup>159</sup> K. Lütolf, 'Dörflingers Reliquienverzeichnis von Beromünster', *Zeitschrift für schweizerische Kirchengeschichte* 12 (1918): 174-5; Julius Baum, 'Das Warnebertusreliquiar in Beromünster', *Zeitschrift für schweizerische Archäologie und Kunstgeschichte* 8 (1946): 198-201.

<sup>160</sup> Joseph Aebi, 'Bericht über ein altes Reliquienkästchen in der Stiftskirche zu Beromünster', *Der Geschichtsfreund* 24 (1869): 240-45.

<sup>161</sup> Katherine Hunvald, 'The Warnebertus Reliquary: A Study in Early Medieval Metalwork' (Phd diss., University of Missouri-Columbia, 2004), 5.

shrine was also constructed with two suspension hinges that would have allowed it to be carried, worn, or hung [Figure 37.C].

The front lid of the Warnebertus shrine depicts two equal-armed crosses surrounded by zoomorphic interlace and a central rosette set with a blue glass cabochon [Figure 37.A]. This composition repeats on the lower panel, although the central rosette there is obscured by an eleventh- or twelfth-century iron lock.<sup>162</sup> Chalices or vessels with vines appear on the back lid and sides of the shrine [Figure 37.C], while the back panel depicts a rectangular section of palmettes surrounded by a frame of vines—motifs which are also found on the Moissac shrine. The inscription on the Warnebertus shrine is found at its base [Figure 37.D],

+WARNEBERTUSP-PFIERE  
IUSITADCONSERVANDORELIQI  
ASSC̃I-MARIEPETRIOṖETRIBUANT  
IPSIUSPONTEFICEAMEN+

Hunvald has translated the passage as, ‘Provost Warnebertus had this casket made for the preservation of relics of saints Marius and Peter. May they grant aid to the bishop himself. Amen’.<sup>163</sup> Baum argues that the name Warnebertus and the titles of ‘p-p’, an abbreviation for *praepositus* or abbot, and ‘ipsius pontifice’, translated as bishop, possibly point to the seventh-century abbot of Soissons, France as the shrine’s patron.<sup>164</sup> This interpretation is based on the presence of a Warnebertus at the Cathedral of Soissons in the seventh century, who held a dual office of provost and bishop between April 667 and March 678, and whose church was dedicated to the Virgin.<sup>165</sup> Indeed, the similarity between the Warnebertus shrine and other Insular

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<sup>162</sup> Hunvald, “The Warnebertus Reliquary: A Study in Early Medieval Metalwork,” 13–6.

<sup>163</sup> Quast, *Reliquienkästchen aus Ennabeuren*, 121; Hunvald, “The Warnebertus Reliquary,” 37.

<sup>164</sup> Baum, “Das Warnebertusreliquiar,” 209.

<sup>165</sup> Egon Wamers, “Warnebertus-Reliquiar,” in *Credo: Christianisierung Europas im Mittelalter*, ed. Christoph Stiegemann, Martin Kroker and Wolfgang Walter, vol. 2 (Petersberg: Imhof, 2013), 136–7.



house-shaped shrines is noteworthy, as St Columbanus journeyed to Soissons and was received by King Clothaire in 611.<sup>166</sup>

While the inscription does not refer to the casket by a specific term, it does explicitly state that the shrine was a container for relics, ‘ADCONSERVANDORELIQI/AS’. This reference to relics is noteworthy not only for the potential connections one might draw between the references to St Peter and the Virgin on the Warnebertus and Mumma shrines but also for the repetition of chalices and beasts, which are similar to those on the Moissac shrine [Figures 25.B-D]; the zoomorphic interlace on the Warnebertus shrines also finds parallels with the zoomorphic interlace on the face of the Monymusk and the back of the Bologna shrines [Figures 14.F, 23.G]. In the case of the Warnebertus shrine, the additional reference to relics means that the chalices and even the three orders of animals as listed in Genesis—the fish, the bird, and the beast—are not as intimately connected with the Eucharist as similar appearances of these motifs on the Moissac shrine are argued to be. The Warnebertus shrine’s use of similar motifs suggests that the chalices or vessels with vines would be suitable for a variety of Christian containers, as the message of salvation through the Eucharist and the grace of God are not completely divorced from the promise of resurrection and the apotropaic powers attributed to the saints.<sup>167</sup>

Unfortunately, neither Insular house-shaped shrines’ named figures provide definitive insights into the original functions of the shrines. However, the Warnebertus shrine’s physical similarity to Insular house-shaped shrines and its

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<sup>166</sup> Yaniv Fox, *Power and Religion in Merovingian Gaul: Columbanian Monasticism and the Frankish Elites* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 8-10.

<sup>167</sup> Snoek, *Medieval Piety from Relics to the Eucharist*, 338-44.

inscription connecting the shrine to the preservation of relics are noteworthy. While one cannot use the Warnebertus shrine to argue that all Insular house-shaped shrines were used as containers for relics, it does provide a Continental example of a shrine highly similar in design to Insular house-shaped shrines and explicitly linked with the cult of relics. As Thomas O'Loughlin notes in his examination of Iona's connection to the wider Christian world, Insular ecclesiastics were in contact with and present at monasteries across Europe, which would have provided opportunities for cultural translation of different types of sacral containers.<sup>168</sup> Moreover, the Warnebertus shrine's use of chalice motifs vis-à-vis its inscription suggests that chalices were not solely employed on shrines constructed to preserve the Eucharist and that similar motifs on Insular house-shaped shrines will need to be treated with more scrutiny than they have previously received.

To address how the Moissac shrine's inscription relates to inscriptions on other shrines, we must turn to one last ninth-century shrine: the Altheus shrine, a complex piece.<sup>169</sup> In 1672, two Milanese craftsmen cleaned the face of the shrine, which was later restored by Johann Nikolaus Ryss, a local goldsmith in Sion who added the flower in the upper register on the face of the shrine [Figure 38.A].<sup>170</sup> The three enamel plates found on the face of the shrine date from the ninth century.<sup>171</sup>

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<sup>168</sup> Thomas O'Loughlin, *Adomnán and the Holy Places: The Perceptions of an Insular Monk on The Locations of the Biblical Drama* (London: T&T Clark, 2007), 152.

<sup>169</sup> Comparable shrines have also been found in Vercelli, Italy, Sofia Uggé, 'Materiali del Museo del Tesoro del Duomo di Vercelli: un aggiornamento preliminare', in *3 Congresso Nazionale di Archeologia Medievale*, ed. Rosa Fiorillo and Paolo Peduto (Florence: All'insegna del giglio, 2003), 22-24; Elisabetta Galletti, '«Ex romano vitro splendentes lapilli». Ricezione di iconografie della glittica ellenistico-romana in cammei vitrei altomedievali', in *Sertum perusinum gemmae oblatum. Docenti e allievi del Dottorato di Perugia in onore di Gemma Sena Chiesa*, ed. Simona Fortunelli (Napoli: Loffredo, 2007), 167-78.

<sup>170</sup> Daniel Thurre, 'Le reliquaire d'Altheus évêque de Sion et abbé de Saint-Maurice', *Helvetica Archaeologica* 24 (1995/6): 136.

<sup>171</sup> Peter Lasko, *Ars Sacra: 800-1200* (Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1972), 85.

The remaining panels, found on the sides, back, and base of the shrine, are original late-eighth- or early-ninth-century pieces [Figures 38.B-C]. SS John and Mary are depicted on the back of the shrine, identified by two accompanying inscriptions—‘+SCA MARIA’ and ‘+SCS JOHANNES’—while the bottom plate of the shrine features a further inscription: ‘HANCCAPSAMDICATA||INHONORSĈE/MARIÆALTHEUSEĪSFIERIROGAVIT’ [Figure 38.D]. Translated, the shrine’s inscription reads, ‘This box is dedicated in honour to St Mary. The bishop Altheus requested it to be made’.<sup>172</sup>

The inscription thus mentions an Altheus, who was the abbot of Saint-Maurice from 722–814, and states that he gave the *capsa* as a gift in honour of Mary, thus showing yet another instance of the Virgin being specifically mentioned or depicted on shrines from the Continent. While the shrine was fitted with suspension rings, Conway notes that these were later additions, although he does not provide a possible date.<sup>173</sup> Even as possible later additions, the suspension rings point to the importance of carrying or hanging Continental purse-shaped shrines, and may have been replacements. The inscription’s reference to the shrine as a *capsam*, translated as ‘box’ or ‘casket’—a term that usually implies a type of container portable in both size and structure—is a unique occurrence in this sample.

While the term *chrismal* may refer to any container for chrism oil, the Eucharist, or relics, the term *capsa* is a more general term for *box* and describes portable containers of various sizes.<sup>174</sup> Previous scholars have not commented on the

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<sup>172</sup> Thurre, ‘Le reliquaire d’Altheus’, 127, 131.

<sup>173</sup> Conway, ‘Portable Reliquaries’, 229.

<sup>174</sup> This will be discussed in more detail in chapter four. For more on the terms *capsa* and *chrismal* see, Francesca Bezzone, ‘Relics and Reliquaries in the Vita Germani Auctore Constantio: The Capsula’, *The Heroic Age: A Journal of Early Medieval Northwestern Europe* 15 (2012): §12-37; Von Erhardt-Siebold, ‘Aldhelm’s Chrismal’, 277-8.

use of *capsa* to denote a type of container that could not technically be opened without removing the panels from its wooden support. Notably, this shows that the conceptualisation of *capsae* suggests they functioned as containers and access to their contents may have been a secondary concern. Still, neither the inscription found on the Mortain shrine nor that on the Altheus shrine explicitly refer to any of their contents. Even so, scholars such as Cynthia Hahn, Scott Montgomery, and Julia Smith note that medieval reliquaries, even those specifically dedicated to or depicting individual saints, did not always contain a single relic, but rather served as containers for collections of relics.<sup>175</sup> Thus the relics that would have been deposited in the Altheus shrine were likely from a variety of saints and not solely of those pictured on the shrine. With the Warnebertus shrine, we see an explicit reference to relics, while the Insular Moissac shrine alludes to baptism. However, overall, these inscriptions suggest a more fluid engagement with boxes for sacral matter, as the Warnebertus and Mortain shrines also display possible Eucharistic motifs along with references to relics, saints, and the ambiguous *ciismeel*, which could be translated as either chrismal or casket. Still, the use of *ciismeel*, *capsa*, and *kistu* on Insular house-shaped shrines makes Aldhelm's riddle all the more relevant, as chrismals may have also been seen or referred to as *capsae* or by other terms.

### **Bell, Book, and Crosier: Commemorative Inscriptions**

Insular house-shaped shrines were not the only Insular ecclesiastical objects that were inscribed: bells, crosiers, and book-shrines also feature inscriptions. Over

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<sup>175</sup> Hahn, 'What Do Reliquaries Do for Relics', 294-300; Montgomery, 'Mittite capud meum', 48-52; Smith, 'Portable Christianity', 146-8.

the course of this section, I will show that the inscriptions on Insular house-shaped shrines do not follow the same formula as those seen on other Insular artefacts, which typically record how the object acts as a prayer for those memorialised in the inscription. As will be shown, the Mortain inscription has more in common with Continental shrines than with their Irish counterparts, which is not surprising given the shrine's Anglo-Carolingian motifs. In addition, the abbreviated inscription of the Moissac shrine also alludes to a religious or ritual function of the shrine in a more direct fashion. The association with both ecclesiastical and secular donors on the Insular shrines shows that there was a material culture of donation that explicitly linked the names of the donors to the highest and most sacred areas of the Church or church hierarchy. This practice of aligning donors with the Church through inscriptions is seen across Continental art, perhaps most tellingly in the use of inscribed Visigothic votive crowns that adorned the choir of Spanish churches and proclaimed the names of patrons to the literate priests in Latin text in the seventh century [Figure 39].<sup>176</sup> Interestingly, only the Mortain and Ranvaik shrines record a name, and the Ranvaik's inscription is a later addition not aligned with the more explicitly Christian inscriptions of the shrine's counterparts.

I will begin my discussion of inscriptions on a small but representative sample of Insular shrines with inscribed bells and bell-shrines. I have chosen these particular shrines for their clarity and divergent patterns so as to highlight variances in their formulaic applications. A. T. Lucas, Máire de Paor, Tomás Ó Carragáin, and

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<sup>176</sup> Gisela López, 'Symbolic Life and Signs of Identity in Visigothic Times', in *The Visigoths from the Migration Period to the Seventh Century: An Ethnographic Perspective*, ed. Peter Heather (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 1999), 24-6; José Antonio Molina Gómez, 'Las coronas de donación regia del tesoro de Guarrazar: la religiosidad en la monarquía visigoda y el uso de modelos bizantinos', *Antigüedad y cristianismo: Monografías históricas sobre la Antigüedad tardía* 21 (2004): 466-9.

Henry Crawford all describe two major forms of Insular shrines or enshrinements: ones that contained the corporeal remains of saints and others that were the enshrined objects the saints interacted with in life or death, such as crosiers, bells, and associative relics.<sup>177</sup> It is important to note that some scholars, including Tomás Ó Carragáin and Lucas, also use the term *enshrinement* to refer to the placement of relics into a shrine.<sup>178</sup> However, I will use *enshrinement* only to refer to the embellishment or encasement of alleged associative relics behind metal panels and other forms of ornamentation, while the term *translation* will refer to the physical transference of relics into shrines, altars, and other containers.

By applying an inscription, the writer could fix an object or shrine within the cult of a specific saint. We can see this type of inscription with the bronze Bell of Clogher, a late eighth-century bell from Donaghmore, Co. Tyrone [Figure 40].<sup>179</sup> The bell was inscribed with the word 'PATRICI' or Patrick on its face and '1272' on its back, both thirteenth-century additions.<sup>180</sup> The inscriptions likely represent later reinterpretations of the medieval bell, as the founder of Clogher, St Mac Cáirthin, was said to have received a bell from St Patrick, although the eighth-century date of the bell prohibits a direct link to these two earlier saints.<sup>181</sup> This would not, however, prohibit later veneration of the bell as a relic of St Patrick, possibly due to its ancient

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<sup>177</sup> A. T. Lucas, 'The Social Role of Relics and Reliquaries in Ancient Ireland', *The Journal of the Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland* 116 (1986): 11-4; Máire de Paor, 'The Relics of Saint Patrick', *Seanchas Ardmhacha: Armagh Diocesan Historical Society* 4, no. 2 (1961): 87; Ó Carragáin, 'Architectural Setting of the Cult of Relics', 168; Crawford, 'A Descriptive List of Irish Shrines', 75.

<sup>178</sup> Ó Floinn, *Irish Shrines and Reliquaries*, 10-13.

<sup>179</sup> *Treasures of Early Irish Art 1500 B.C. to 1500 A.D.*, ed. Polly Cone (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1977), 143.

<sup>180</sup> Lisa M. Bitel, 'Tools and Scripts for Cursing in Medieval Ireland', *Memoirs of the American Academy in Rome* 51/52 (2006): 8.

<sup>181</sup> William Doherty, 'Some Ancient Crosses and Other Antiquities of Inishowen, County Donegal', *Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy (1889-1901)* 2 (1889-1901): 103; Mahr and Raftery, *Christian Art*, 144.

appearance. Indeed, Karen Overbey argues that the thirteenth-century inscription could have been used to strengthen Clogher's ties to Armagh through using the name of its founder, St Patrick.<sup>182</sup> As the bell is not enshrined nor decorated with other motifs suggesting a Christian function, the two simple inscriptions are now the only visible elements marking the bell as a relic. Perhaps the choice to not enshrine the bell was deliberate: its present state would still allow the bell to be rung, and the sound of saintly bells was believed capable of chasing off threats both otherworldly and mundane.<sup>183</sup> However, not every hand-bell inscription referred to a saint: the eighth-century Clog beannuighthe, for instance, features a dedicatory inscription that does not refer to any particular saint [Figure 41].<sup>184</sup>

The Clog beannuighthe is fashioned from copper alloy, with no rivets, and a simple handle rests at the apex of the bell. The inscription itself reads 'OROITARCHŪMASCACHMAILELLO', which Petrie translates as 'Pray for Cummasoach, son of Ailill'.<sup>185</sup> As Petrie notes, the Cummasoach mentioned on the shrine is likely the Cumasah, son of Ailill, who is referred to in the *Annals of the Four Masters* as having died in 904.<sup>186</sup> As we see with these two bells, inscriptions can also be dedicatory or referential, but as in the latter case of the Clog beannuighthe, dedicatory inscriptions on Insular shrines are most often a means of recording important figures' contributions to the construction or maintenance of the shrine or

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<sup>182</sup> Karen Eileen Overbey, *Sacral Geographies: Saints, Shrines, and Territory in Medieval Ireland* (Turnhout: Brepols Publishers, 2012), 119-20.

<sup>183</sup> Lucas, 'Social Role of Relics and Reliquaries', 9-11.

<sup>184</sup> Mahr and Raftery, *Christian Art*, 144-5; Cormac Bourke, 'Early Irish Hand-Bells', *The Journal of the Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland* 110 (1980): 57-8.

<sup>185</sup> George Petrie, and Margaret Stokes, *Christian Inscriptions in the Irish Language*, vol. 2 (Dublin: Royal Historical and Archaeological Association, 1872), 108.

<sup>186</sup> Ibid., 108-9; *Annals of the Four Masters*, ed. John O'Donovan, vol. 2 (Dublin: Hodges, Smith, and Co., 1856), 571.

ecclesiastical object, and serve as a means of continuing the bonds between the deceased and the living ecclesiastics of the church to which the artefact belongs.<sup>187</sup>

Lastly, the Bell of the Testament [Figures 42.A-C], a twelfth-century bell-shrine, also contains a dedicatory self-referential inscription on the back of the shrine along the edges of the frame,

ORDODOMNALLULACHLAINDLASINDERN/ADINCLOCSA || OCUSDO  
DOMNALLCHOMARBAPHATRAICICONDER/NADOCUSDOD  
CHATHALANUMAELCHALLANDDOMAERINCH/ LUIC || OCUSDO  
CHONDULIGUINMAINENCONAMACCAIBROCUMTAIG.<sup>188</sup>

Michelli translates the inscription as ‘Pray for Domnall Ua Lochlainn for whom was made this bell // and for Domnall, coarb of Patrick, in whose house (it) was made and for Cathalan ua Máel Challand, for the keeper of this bell / / and for Cú Dúilig Ua Inmainen, with his sons, (who) enshrined (it)’.<sup>189</sup> Michelli suggests that the Domnall mentioned as the shrine’s patron was Domnall Mac Amhalgaidh, abbot of Armagh from 1091 to 1105.<sup>190</sup> The inscription directly refers to the shrine’s contents, a bell (*cloc*) and the container itself (*taig*).

As with the inscriptions on bells and bell-shrines, the inscriptions found on crosiers follow a formula of offering the objects as prayers for those mentioned.

Whether all enshrined Insular crosiers were initially constructed to contain relics, were enshrined relics themselves, or both is largely undetermined.<sup>191</sup> However, in

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<sup>187</sup> *Continuing bonds* is a social research term that is used to denote the varied ways in which living members of a community are still influenced by the dead and seek to maintain some form of connection with the dead, either through rituals, narratives, or material cultures. See, Nigel P. Field, Beryl Gao, and Lisa Paderna, ‘Continuing Bonds in Bereavement: an Attachment Theory Based Perspective’, *Death Studies* 29, no. 4 (2005): 277-99; Dennis Klass, Phyllis R. Silverman, and Steven Nickman, *Continuing Bonds: New Understandings of Grief* (Taylor & Francis, 2014).

<sup>188</sup> Perette Michelli, ‘The Inscriptions on Pre-Norman Irish Reliquaries’, *Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy* 96 (1996): 22.

<sup>189</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>190</sup> *Ibid.*, 23; *Annals of the Four Masters*, vol. 2, 943.

<sup>191</sup> For more on this complex issue see, Cormac Bourke, ‘A Crozier and Bell from Inishmurray and Their Place in Ninth-Century Irish Archaeology’, *Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy. Section C: Archaeology, Celtic Studies, History, Linguistics, Literature* 85C (1985): 150; Griffin Murray,



describing the wooden core of the Inishmurray crosier, Bourke notes that its diameter of 23 mm indicates that it likely did not function outside of providing support for the crosier's overall structure [Figure 43], and Overbey notes that enshrined crosiers may have performed as relics via their incorporation of constructional elements like those used in Insular enshrinements.<sup>192</sup> Also, the crosier functioned as a badge of office and could be aligned with specific, sometimes earlier saints. Famous crosiers like the Crosier of St Patrick, the *Baschal-Isu*—supposedly the staff of Christ given to Patrick by a hermit—further attest to the importance of crosiers to Insular art.<sup>193</sup>

Dedicatory inscriptions on these artefacts record how the object was constructed as a prayer or pious gift. The Kells crosier, a staff containing elements from the ninth to the eleventh centuries, is a good example of this type of formulaic inscription [Figure 44.A].<sup>194</sup> The crosier bears an inscription on the interior arch of its crook reading, 'ORDOCONDUILIGOCUS DOMELFINNEN', or 'Pray for Cúduilig and for Melfinnen' [Figure 44.B].<sup>195</sup> George Pertrie identified the names as belonging to ecclesiastical figures from Kells, whereas Máire Mac Dermott and Perette Michelli have suggested the royal heir of Cashel, Cú Duilig.<sup>196</sup> The crosier itself is constructed from a wooden core that was encased in copper-alloy sheets, which have been secured by nailing the sheets onto the wooden core and further bound through a series of three ninth-century knops.<sup>197</sup> The wooden core of the crook was broken or

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'Insular-type Crosiers: Their Construction and Characteristics', in *Making and Meaning in Insular Art*, ed. Rachel Moss (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2005), 91-2; Overbey, *Sacral Geographies*, 154-66.

<sup>192</sup> Bourke, 'Crozier and Bell from Inishmurray', 150; Overbey, *Sacral Geographies*, 163-6.

<sup>193</sup> Lucas, 'Social Role of Relics and Reliquaries', 6-7; Brian Phádraig, 'St. Patrick; His Crozier; His Writings', *Dublin Historical Record* 24, no. 1 (1970): 189-92.

<sup>194</sup> Máire Mac Dermott, 'The Kells Crozier', *Archaeologia* 96 (1955): 59-113.

<sup>195</sup> *Ibid.*, 104.

<sup>196</sup> Petrie, *Christian Inscriptions in the Irish Language*, vol. 2, 116-7; Mac Dermott, 'The Kells Crozier', 105-6; Michelli, 'Inscriptions on Pre-Norman Irish Reliquaries', 19-20.

<sup>197</sup> Bourke, 'Crozier and Bell from Inishmurray', 161.

cut off at one point and incorporated into a new crosier head. The crook follows the same principles of construction as the staff, albeit with the use of silver instead of copper-alloy sheets. The metalwork of the crosier was extended past the wooden core and was sloped downward, thus creating a cavity at the terminal of the crook. The copper-alloy frame of this drop-box features a head at its apex, while its copper-alloy panel shows signs of a previously lost gem or glass insert. This panel was slid into the frame and then riveted. Overbey has suggested that these drop-boxes may have contained relics, thus creating portable reliquaries.<sup>198</sup>

While it is unlikely that every crosier also served as a reliquary, the late eleventh-century Lismore crosier [Figure 45] was found to contain relics, fragments of wood and cloth, which were sealed inside a small metal box and placed into the drop-box of the crosier.<sup>199</sup> Furthermore, the Lismore crosier was also inscribed with a dedicatory inscription on two rings at the base of the crook, reading ‘ORDONIALMACMEICCAEDUCAIN LASANERNADINGRESA + ORDONECTAINCERDORIGNEINGRESA’.<sup>200</sup> Petrie translates the inscription as ‘Pray for Niall, son of Mac Aeducain [i.e. Mac Egan], for whom this work of art was made’ and ‘Pray for Nectan, the artisan, who made this work of art’.<sup>201</sup> Much like the Kells crosier, the Lismore’s inscription begins with a call to prayer, ‘ORDO’, and then lists the intended figures. The inscription refers to the physical shrine itself, but it uses the Old Irish *grés*, which loosely translates to ‘handicraft, workmanship, ornamentation, and artistic work’ and includes both physical objects, from crosiers to

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<sup>198</sup> Overbey is cautious here as it cannot be ascertained when the relics were placed in the Lismore crosier. However, the cavities created by drop-boxes and their riveted panels do suggest the possibility of such. Overbey, *Sacral Geographies*, 158.

<sup>199</sup> Ibid.

<sup>200</sup> Petrie, *Christian Inscriptions in the Irish Language*, vol. 2, 118.

<sup>201</sup> Ibid.

needlework, to more ephemeral pieces of art, such as poetry.<sup>202</sup> Indeed, over half of the shrines comprising Michelli's study of pre-Norman Irish reliquaries begin with a call to pray for those listed. Most of the crosiers in Michelli's and Petrie's studies refer to the shrine as a work of art (*grés*), while inscriptions on book-shrines refer to the shrine as a cover or case (*cumtach*), as seen with the Soiscél Molaise [Figure 46],

‘+ORDO...NFAILADDOCHOMARBAMOLAISE  
LASAN...INCUTACHSADO...NLAD+  
DOGILLABAITHÍNCHERDDORIGNIIGRESA’;

Raghnall translates this inscription as a ‘prayer for ...nfailad successor of Molaise who caused this shrine to be made, for ..nlan and (a prayer) for Gillabaithin the goldsmith who made it’.<sup>203</sup> Again, the inscription begins with a prayer and here describes the shrine in more general terms.

In the above examination of the Moissac and other Continental shrines, the term *capsa* is used in several examples, while the Mortain shrine is the only container that records the term *chrismal*, and even this is subject to debate. While the appearance of rough, incised runes on the Ranvaik shrine may suggest that the inscription was intended to proclaim a transference of ownership and thus function, it still refers to the shrine as a *kistu*, following the Moissac and Continental pattern of referring to the shrines as *capsae*. This repetition of the term *capsa* is noteworthy in light of the alternative translation of the word *ciismeel* on the Mortain shrine as *cistmel* or box. Moreover, the Old Irish inscriptions presented above only refer to the physical container as either a work of art (*grés*), which aligns the shrines with

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<sup>202</sup> 'Grés', <http://dil.ie/26613>, accessed November 15 2015.

<sup>203</sup> Raghnall Ó Floinn, 'The Soiscél Molaise', *Clogher Record* 13, no. 2 (1989): 58.

contemporary attitudes towards poetry or as simply a cover or case (*cumtach*). While in some cases these inscriptions post-date the production of Insular house-shaped shrines, they do illustrate how older objects may have been granted additional uses by audiences responding to and being influenced by older material cultures, much in the same way that the Moissac shrine's inscription and alterations may represent a shift in functions.<sup>204</sup> Thus any textual analysis of portable shrines in sources contemporary with Insular house-shaped shrines needs to widen its parameters beyond the confines of the term *chrismal*, as alternative terms appear to be much more connected with Insular house-shaped shrines.

### ***Chrismal: Hagiographic Texts and Physical Evidence***

As discussed at the beginning of this chapter, while the contents or functions of Aldhelm's chrismal are disputable, the exterior of the chrismal is explained in detail. Aldhelm describes his chrismal as being built with a moveable lid—'sed nullus reserat nec limina pandit/Culmina ni fuerint aulis sublata quaternis'—which is also decorated in metalwork and golden bosses—'aurea dum fulvis flavescit bulla metallis'. While Aldhelm's chrismal has strong correlations with Insular house-shaped shrines, a wider exploration of terms associated with containers for sacral matter is called for, as discussed in the previous sections on inscriptions. The detail of Aldhelm's description is not found in contemporary Insular or Continental sources, and the inscriptions on Insular and Continental shrines further highlight the need to examine alternative terms.

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<sup>204</sup> See the discussion on the Berlin Key in the introduction to this thesis.

While chrismals are not typically described in detail, we can find insights into the size of these sacral containers and others like them. The *Vita sancti Comgalli* records a scene in which the saint's chrismal frightens a group of men who wish to do him harm, 'Cum ergo venis[s]ent gentiles ad sanctum Comgallum foris operantem, et crismale eius super capam suam vidissent, putauerunt crismal illud deum sancti Comgalli esse; et non ausi sunt tangere eum latrunculi causa timoris dei sui'.<sup>205</sup> The chrismal is not described in any detail, although it is portable in size and, implicitly, it could be seen at some distance by the thieves. In another instance, a chrismal is recorded in a similarly undetailed manner in the *Vita Prima* of St Brigit, 'Sanctus Episcopus Broon feuersus est ad suam regionem, & porauit secum chrisma a S. Brigida; illa autem habitaba juxta mare'.<sup>206</sup> The chrismal is accidentally left on the beach during an incoming tide, but through a miraculous turn of events, it is found undamaged. Overall, the chrismal is mentioned only briefly, and its function or contents are not directly engaged with in Insular hagiography.<sup>207</sup>

In penitentials, chrismals are usually discussed either in sections on the preservation of the Eucharist or in relation to more general concerns over securing sacral matter. The *Paenitentiale Cummeani*, which circulated widely during the eighth and ninth centuries, mentions the chrismal in its section on the Host, *De quaestionibus Sacrificii*, 'Qui autem perdiderit suum crismal aut solum sacrificium in

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<sup>205</sup> 'Saint Comgall was working outside when the gentiles came to him, they saw his chrismal and cape, and they thought the chrismal was Saint Comgall's God; and none of the robbers dared to touch him because of fear of his God', 'Vita sancti Comgalli abbatis de Bennchor' *Vitae Sanctorum Hiberniae*, ed. Charles Plummer, vol. 2 (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 1997), 11. cap: 22

<sup>206</sup> 'The holy bishop Brón returned to his part of the country and took with him a chrismal from saint Brigit. Now he lives by the sea', translation by Sean Connolly, 'Vita Prima Sanctae Brigitae Background and Historical Value', *The Journal of the Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland* 119 (1989): 39; *Trias Thaumaturga*, ed. John Colgan (Dublin: Edmund Bruke, 1977), 538.

<sup>207</sup> O'Donoghue and Elbern both focus on liturgy and penitentials instead, O'Donoghue, 'Insular Chrismals and House-Shaped Shrines', 83-8; Elbern, 'Baptizatus et confirmatus', 25-45.

regione qualibet et non inveniatur, tres xlmas vel annum'.<sup>208</sup> Notably, the penitential does not say that the chrismal contained only the Host. In early medieval penitentials, such as the *Paenitentiale Pseudo-Theodori*, concern over the loss or pollution of consecrated materials is more commonly described, 'Qui creaturam perdiderit, hoc est thus, tabulas aut scedulam vel sal benedictum aut panem novum consecratum vel aliquid huic simile, vii dies peniteat'.<sup>209</sup> The *Paenitentiale Cummeani*, *Penitentialis Vinniani*, and the *Paenitentiale Ecgberhti* all have similar injunctions against losing consecrated objects (*creaturam*) or blessing(s) of God (*benedictionem Dei*), and all prescribed the same length of penance.<sup>210</sup> Notably, the eleventh-century *Tres Canones Hibernici* further describes how the chrismal may be associated with other church articles, including the relics of saints, 'Si quis refugiam crismalis alicuius sancti aut refugium baculis aut cimbaliis fregerit aliquomodo vel per rapinam predam abstraxerit, vel homini aliqua ratione nocuerit, septempliciter resituet et in dura penitentia in peregrinatione extranea per .v. annos permaneat'.<sup>211</sup> In this instance, the chrismal is listed along with other ecclesiastical objects and relics, suggesting that a chrismal could still become a relic through prolonged contact with a saint. The chrismal further features in the *Praefatio Crismalis*, a blessing of the chrismal which

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<sup>208</sup> 'But he who loses his chrismal or only the host in what place soever, and it cannot be found, three forty-day periods or a year', translation by Ludwig Bieler, *The Irish Penitentials*, ed. Ludwig Bieler, *Scriptores Latini Hiberniae* (Dublin: The Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies, 1963), 7, 131.

<sup>209</sup> 'He who loses a consecrated object, that is incense, a tablet, document, blessed salt, newly consecrated bread, or something similar, seven days penance', *Paenitentiale pseudo-Theodori* ed. Carine Van Rhijn, vol. 156B, *Corpus Christianorum Series Latina* (Turnhout: Brepols Publishers, 2009), Chapter: 34, Canon: 2, Page: 94, Line: 5.

<sup>210</sup> *Irish Penitentials*, *Paenitentiale Cummeani*, Chapter: 10, Verse: 1, Page: 124; *Penitentialis Vinniani*, Chapter 52, Page: 92. Egbertus Eboracensis, *Sancti Egberti Eboracensis archiepiscopi Canones de remediis peccatorum*, ed. J. P. Migne, vol. 89, *Patrologia Latina* (Paris: Garnier et Migne, 1863), Col.0451D.

<sup>211</sup> 'If anyone in any way breaks into the place of keeping of the chrismal of any saint, or a place of keeping for staves or cymbals, or takes away anything by robbery, he shall make sevenfold restitution and remain five year in hard penance in exile abroad', translation by Ludwig Bieler, *Irish Penitentials*, *Tres canones Hibernici*, 182-3.

appears in the eighth-century *Pontifical of Egbert* by Egbert, the archbishop of York and brother of Eadberet King of Northumbria, which reads, ‘Omnipotens Deus, Trinitas inseparabilis, minibus nostris opem tue benedictionis infunde, ut, per nostram benedictionem, hoc vasculum sanctificetur, et corporis Christi novum sepulchrum Spiritus Sancti gratia perficiatur’.<sup>212</sup> Similar prayers appear in the *Missale Francorum*, demonstrating a connection between the Eucharist and the chrismal, sanctified through a prayer specifically calling on the Holy Trinity to make the chrismal into a new tomb (*novum sepulchrum*) for the body of Christ.<sup>213</sup> Notably, the chrismal is mentioned only in the titles of the *Pontifical of Egbert* and the *Missale Francorum*; the container itself is denoted by the term *ministerium*, ‘Oremus, fratres karissimi, ut deus omnipotens hoc ministerium corporis filii sui domini nostri Iesu Christi gerolum benedictionem, sanctificationis tutamine, defensionis dominatione[s] implere dignetur’.<sup>214</sup> Within these prayers, we see a more fluid mixing of terms than has previously been addressed in scholarship on Insular house-shaped shrines.

Indeed, over the evolution of Insular and Continental hagiography, the terms *chrismal* and diminutives of *capsa* become associated with each other. The possible origins of this connection can be seen with the fifth-century *Vita Germani*, which

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<sup>212</sup> ‘Almighty God, inseparable Trinity pour into our hands the riches of your blessing so that by our blessing this small vessel may be sanctified and a new tomb of the Body of Christ may be accomplished by the grace of the Holy Spirit’, translation by O'Donoghue, 'Insular Chrismals and House-Shaped Shrines', 84; *The Pontifical of Egbert*, ed. Willam Greenwell (Edinburgh: The Surtees Society, 1853), 48.

<sup>213</sup> *Missale Francorum* (Cod. Vat. Reg. Lat. 257), ed. Leo Eizenhöfer, Petrus Siffrin, and Leo Cunibert Mohlberg (Rome: Herder, 1957), 19.

<sup>214</sup> ‘Let us pray, my dear brothers, in order that Almighty God deems worthy to fill this *ministerium* of the body of his son our Lord Jesus Christ with a holy blessing, by a means of protection of sanctification, the dominions of defences’, The prayer recorded by Egbert is exactly the same as the *Missale Francorum*, save the brothers are referred to as ‘dilectissimi’ as well as ‘karissimi’, *ibid.*; *Pontifical of Egbert*, 48.

offers a well-known hagiography and saint: St Germanus of Auxerre, a Gaulish bishop who travelled to Britain around 429 to combat the Pelagian heresy.<sup>215</sup> In the following scene, St Germanus cures a young girl's blindness by taking a container with relics in it, which he wears around his neck, by placing the container on the eyes of the penitent. Bede records St Germanus' missionary trip to Britain in his *Historia ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum* and bases his writing on the *Vita Germani*:

*Vita sancti Germani*

Ac deinde Germanus plenus Spiritu Sancto invocat Trinitatem et protinus adhaerentem lateri suo capsulam cum sanctorum reliquiis collo avulsam minibus comprehendit eamque in conspectu omnium puellae oculis applicavit.<sup>216</sup>

*Historia ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum*

ac deinde Germanus plenus Spiritu sancto invocat Trinitatem. Nec mora, adherentem lateri suo capsulam cum sanctorum reliquiis collo avulsam manibus comprehendit eam que in conspectu omnium puellae oculis applicavit.<sup>217</sup>

Bede produces a near exact copy of the *Vita Germani*, and throughout the *Historia ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum*, he continues to use the diminutive *capsula* to denote a small, portable container for sacral matter.<sup>218</sup> The *Vita Germani* is one of the first and most widespread *vitae* to use the term *capsula* in such a manner; the term is then found in the writings of Gregory of Tours, who uses *chrismal* and *capsula* interchangeably. Gregory of Tour's *Miraculis sancti Aridii abbatis* mentions the miraculous power of chrismals, but he too does not engage in descriptions of what chrismals would have looked like. All we know from Gregory of Tours is that the

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<sup>215</sup> Robert Austin Markus, 'Pelagianism: Britain and the Continent', *The Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 37, no. 02 (1986): 198-200; Bezzone, 'Relics and Reliquaries in the Vita Germani', §1-3.

<sup>216</sup> 'And then Germanus, full of the Holy Ghost, invoked the Trinity, and taking into his hands a small casket of relics of saints, which hung around his neck, applied it to the eyes of the girl', Constantius of Lyon, *Vita Germani episcopi Autissiodorensis*, ed. W. Levison, vol. 7, Monumenta Germaniae Historica (Hannover: Hahn, 1920), 56.

<sup>217</sup> 'And then Germanus, full of the Holy Ghost, invoked the Trinity. Without delay, taking into his hands a small casket of relics of saints, which hung around his neck, he applied it to the eyes of the girl', Bede Venerabilis, *Historia ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum*, vol. 1375, Book: 1, Chapter: 18, Page: 178, Line: 8.

<sup>218</sup> Ibid., Book: 3, Chapter: 11, Page: 70, Line: 30.



chrismal is small enough to be gathered up by accident along with clothes, although this does not prevent the inevitable divine retribution for the mishandling of the holy container, ‘Interea unus e famulis praefati viri, apprehenso chrismario quod a se projecerat, nesciens inter vestimenta reposuit’.<sup>219</sup> While the sacral and indeed miraculous nature of the chrismal is described in the above, the exterior of the shrine is not mentioned, although its small size is implied by the ease with which it is accidentally covered. Indeed, Gregory of Tours described a *capsula* containing relics worn about the neck in a manner similar to how Irish monks wore their chrismals, ‘Revertens que cum eo, ille parumper pulveris beati sepulchri pro benedictione sustulit, quod in capsulam positum ad collum meum dependit’.<sup>220</sup>

In the above passages from Bede, Constantius, and Gregory of Tours, the *capsula* is worn around the neck, although none are necessarily opened. In Irish hagiography too, the chrismal is described as being worn around the neck. The *Vita Germani* tells us something similar: the container is quite secure because St Germanus wears it to bed, ‘Noctibus numquam vestitum, raro cingulum, raro calciamenta detraxit, redimitus loro semper et capsula sanctorum reliquias continent’.<sup>221</sup> In the passages cited above, the *capsula* is worn around the neck, which necessitates a consideration of the physical evidence of surviving chains and suspension straps. While chapter two will go into greater detail on the provenances

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<sup>219</sup> ‘In the meantime, one of the men’s servants degraded themselves when they took the chrismal, unwittingly laid among the clothes’, Gregorius Turonensis, *Vita Sancti Aridii Abbatistis*, ed. J. P. Migne, vol. 72, Patrologia Latina (Paris: Garnier et Migne, 1849), Col.1140B - Col. 40C.

<sup>220</sup> ‘And when he returned, he quickly took away some of the blessed dust of the tomb for blessing, and he placed it in a casket hung around my neck’, *Gregorii episcopi Turonensis libri historiarum x*, ed. Bruno Krusch and Wilhelm Levison, vol. SRM 1, Monumenta Germaniae Historica (Hannover: Hahn, 1938), Book: 8, Chapter: 15, Page: 381, Line: 5.

<sup>221</sup> ‘During nights, he was undressed, was never clothed, rarely belted, rarely shoed, and always garlanded with a *capsa* by a leather strap containing relics of the saints’, Constantius of Lyon, *Vita Germani episcopi Autissiodorensis*, 7, 253.

and archaeological contexts of Insular house-shaped shrines, it can be said that the Clonard and Melhus shrines each were found to have fragments of leather within their suspension fittings; a chain exists on the Bologna shrine, 32 cm in length, and Blindheim argues that it is original, or at least of an early date, as it shows constructional similarities to a silver chain from a grave at Three-Mile-Water, Arklow, Co. Wicklow in Ireland as well as chains found in the Cuerdale Hoard, a find in Berg, Hurum, Buskerud in Norway.<sup>222</sup> Even if the chain was original, its short length would make wearing the shrine around the neck impossible without separating the chain from the shrine's clasps. While suspension fittings or evidence for suspension fittings can be found on fifteen of the surviving eighteen Insular house-shaped shrines, the variance in overall size of the shrines suggests that shrines may have been carried or worn in different ways. Indeed, the Moissac shrine is not fitted with any suspension straps or rings, while larger shrines, such as the Clonard shrine, would have originally been around 16 cm in height, 19.2 cm in length, and 7.3 cm in width. If the shrine was worn directly over the chest, such a large object would restrict movement, making its alleged ministerial functions difficult.<sup>223</sup>

Still, there is evidence on the shrines themselves that some were designed to be appreciated when viewed from above. The enamelling on the ridgepole of the Ranvaik shrine can only be seen when viewing the shrine from above [Figure 19.H], yet there is no ornamentation on the bottom plate [Figure 19.E], which would presumably be visible if the shrine were worn on a chain and rested on the chest. Equally so, the detail of the ridgepole is lost if the shrine is worn too high on the

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<sup>222</sup> Blindheim, 'A House-Shaped Irish-Scots Reliquary', 29.

<sup>223</sup> For the importance of the *viaticum* and travelling Insular monks see, Gilbert Márkus, 'The Sick and the Dying in the Book of Deer', in *Studies on the Book of Deer*, ed. Katherine Forsyth (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2008), 67-97.

chest. Quast, drawing on the square shapes carved into Insular monumental stonework that may depict books, book-shrines, or satchels, suggests that these and similar shrines may have been carried inside of bags that were looped around the neck and worn at the side.<sup>224</sup> Researchers at the National Museum of Scotland have partnered with contemporary leatherworkers, including Ian Dunlop, to examine the stress patterns found on fragments from Insular leather satchels to work towards several reconstructions.<sup>225</sup> They found that Insular leather bags would have likely carried a multitude of objects.<sup>226</sup> Even so, if Insular house-shaped shrines were fitted with long chains or straps that went around the head, and rested on the hip or side of the wearer, it would be easier to remove their pin-locks and open the shrines. While it is difficult to say whether these shrines would be worn on the left or right side, the surviving pin-locks and pin-lock entrances can be found on the left endplates of ten of the Insular house-shaped shrines, suggesting these shrines may have been worn on the left side of the body. This would free the right hand to remove the locking-pin as needed. With the Ranvaik shrine, wear patterns on the back and front panels show greater wear on the bottom edges of the shrine and are particularly concentrated on the bottom-right corner [Figures 47.A-B]. If the shrine were worn as suggested above, this bottom right corner would be in greater contact with the wearer's clothing while they were moving, although it is important to note that these wear patterns may be due to a similar handling at any point in the object's use-life. Still, there is

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<sup>224</sup> See chapter five of this thesis for a longer discussion of these stone sculptures. Quast, *Reliquienkästchen aus Ennabeuren*, 45-9.

<sup>225</sup> *Early Medieval Scotland: Individuals, Communities and Ideas*, ed. David Clarke, Martin Goldberg, and Alice Blackwell (Edinburgh: NMS Enterprises, 2012), 110-2.

<sup>226</sup> Bernard Meehan, 'Book Satchels in Medieval Scotland and Ireland', in *A Crannog of the First Millennium A.D.*, ed. Anne Crone and Ewan Campbell (Edinburgh: Society of Antiquaries of Scotland, 2005), 87-90.

markedly more wear on the left edges of the front and back panels of the Ranvaik shrine, suggesting that the shrine's left edge was gripped while the locking-pin was removed from the right endplate, thus holding the shrine in place.

### **‘Scrín’, ‘Meinistir’, and ‘Cumdach’: Irish Answers to an Anglo-Saxon Riddle?**

*Capsa* and *chrismal* are not the only terms that can be applied to Aldhelm's golden (*flavescit*) container. While the *Annals of Ulster* were compiled in the sixteenth century and the *Annals of the Four Masters* in the seventeenth, both drew from earlier sources, some now lost, and both utilise the Old Irish word *scrín* (shrine) to discuss containers for sacral matter. In the *Annals of Ulster* 800.6, the shrine of Conlead is described as silver and gold—‘Positio reliquiarum Conlaid hi scrín oir ⁊ argait’—and in 801.1, the relics of Rónán son of Berach are placed in a silver and gold chest—‘positio reliquiarum Ronaen filii Berich in arca auri ⁊ argenti’.<sup>227</sup> A similar phrasing appears in the *Annals of the Four Masters*, 796.6, ‘Taisi naomh Ronáin, mic Beraigh, do chor i n-áirc baí ar na h-imdenamh d’ór ⁊ d’argatt’.<sup>228</sup> While the sizes of these shrines are not fully detailed in the above, according to twelfth-century sources, the *scrín* may have been understood as akin to a small chest, as seen with *Reliquary of Adamnán*, ‘Ba hamra intí Adomnán, ba mór serce ‘mo Día ⁊ ‘mo chobnesom. Is lais ro tarclamtha in mór-martra noéb i n-oen-scrín ocus is í in scrín sin dorat Cillíni Droichthech mac Díchlocha dochum hErend do dénam síd ocus

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<sup>227</sup> ‘The placing of the relics of Conlaed in a shrine of gold and silver’ and ‘The placing of the relics of Rónán son of Berach in a gold and silver casket’, translation in *The Annals of Ulster (to A.D. 1131)*, ed. Seán Mac Airt and Gearóid Mac Niocaill (Dublin: DIAS, 1983), 256.

<sup>228</sup> ‘The relics of Ronan, son of Bearach were placed in a shrine formed of gold and silver’, translation in *Annals of the Four Masters*, vol. 2, 404.

attaig Ceneoil conaill 7 Eogain'.<sup>229</sup> The poem goes on to list a host of relics, including skulls, cloaks, and a piece of the True Cross. The shrine (*scrín*) appears to have been decorated in metalwork like Insular house-shaped shrines, while its overall size is only ambiguously alluded to by the list of its contents. Still, small portions of these relics could fit inside any Insular house-shaped shrine, and the poetic imagining of Adamnán's shrine is constructed to reinforce such a reading, seen specifically with the author's mention of St Martin's cloak.<sup>230</sup> The corporeal remains of Insular saints are described as specific body parts, such as a tooth of St Patrick and the skulls of various saints—'Fil an mullach Mochutu,/cona-gab Les Mar/fil and mullach MoChoe,/lam' Choémoc co ngrád'—and may have all been fragments rather than complete body parts.<sup>231</sup>

The ninth-century *Vita tripartita sancti Patricii* also features a *cumtach*, a term which carried connotations of a larger, almost chest-like object (*taig*), 'IShe iarum Fiac epscop cítaraoirdned laLaihniu. Dobert ano Patraic cumdach doFiac .i. clocc, meinistir, bachall, pólairi, oculus fácaib morfeiser diamúntir leis .i. Mochatóc insi [Fáill], Augustin insi Bice, Tecán oculus Diarmait oculus Naindid oculus Pol oculus Fedelmí'.<sup>232</sup> Here, St Patrick gives a *cumtach* containing objects much larger than could fit within an Insular house-shaped shrine, thus rendering this alternative term

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<sup>229</sup> 'Illustrious was the man Adhamhnán; great was his love towards God and towards his neighbour. By him the great relics of the Saints were assembled in a single shrine, and that was the shrine which Cillíne Droichtheach mac Díochlocha conveyed to Ireland to make intercession of peace between Cinéal Chonaill and Cinéal Eoghain', translated by Lucius Gwynn, 'The Reliquary of Adamnan', *Archivium Hibernicum* 4 (1915): 204, 208.

<sup>230</sup> Raymond van Dam, *Saints and Their Miracles in Late Antique Gaul* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011), 24-7.

<sup>231</sup> 'Here is the skull of Mochuda, he who established Lismore: Mochoé skull also, and that of beloved Mochaémóg', translated by Gwynn, 'Reliquary of Adamnan', 206, 210.

<sup>232</sup> 'So, Patrick gives a case to Fiacc [containing], a bell, a ministering-box [meinistir], a crozier, [and] tablets; and he left seven of his household with him, My-Catoc of Inis Fail, Augustin of Inis-becc, Tecan, and Diarmait and Naindid and Paul and Fedelmí', translation based on *The Tripartite Life of Patrick: With Other Documents Relating to that Saint*, trans. Whitley Stokes, vol. 1 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 191-2.

unsuitable for a direct comparison. However, the *meinistir* of the *Vita tripartita sancti Patricii* offers a more fitting term.

As Conway and Ó Floinn have discussed, two other terms specifically associated with smaller and indeed portable containers for sacral matter in early Christian literature are the Latin *ministerium* and the derivative Old Irish *meinistir*.<sup>233</sup> Much like the chrismal, the *meinistir* is constructed from metal and is possibly gilt, according to the *Vita tripartita sancti Patricii*,

Foraccaib Patraic hiForgnaidi ocus foraccaib a Deirgdeirc leis .i. meinistir nobith fó a coim fadesin: dochrethumu doronath ocus buindi óir fuirri thos, ocus foraccaib a bachaill ut predixiums, ocus foraccaib mind doringe cona laim feissin, Donaidi Matha a ainm, ocus doronad cross cruán moithni fair ocus ceithri ardda cruánmoin; ocus foraccaib laiss mind ali .i. cosmaillius cometa libair Iohain nád mór hifail martraí Poil locus Petair ocus alaili ocus biid dogrés arbeinn innascríne.<sup>234</sup>

The name given to the *meinistir*, Derg-derc, may be a reference to its hollowed out (*drec*) wooden core, seen with some Insular house-shaped shrines, while the rod or beam on the *meinistir*'s roof (*túas*) may refer to a ridgepole, which is also found on Insular house-shaped shrines.<sup>235</sup> The surviving ridgepole fragments and evidence for lost ridgepoles suggest that they were a prolific element of house-shaped shrine construction; whole or partial ridgepoles can be found on eight of the eighteen surviving Insular house-shaped shrines. In addition, the *meinistir* is included in the above along with other relics and badges of office, and before the twelfth century may at times have been constructed from metalwork, as seen in the *Betha Bhairre Ó*

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<sup>233</sup> Conway, 'Portable Reliquaries', 223; Ó Floinn, 'House-Shaped Shrine from Clonard', 54.

<sup>234</sup> 'Patrick left him in Forгнаide, and left with him his Derg-derc, that is, a ministerium which used to be on his chest (or waist): it was made of bronze and there was a pole of gold on its roof; and he left his crosier as we already said; and he left a venerated object which he made with his own hand, the Donaide Matha was its name and a red cross with four points was made and coloured with red enamel; and he left him another venerated object, namely, resembling the case of the book of John by the vessels of relics of Peter Paul and the martyrs; and it is always on the peak of the shrine', translation based on *The Tripartite Life of Patrick*, vol.1, 86-7.

<sup>235</sup> 'House-Shaped Shrine from Clonard', 54.

*Chorcaigh*. ‘Ro edhbair sein a chill do Bhairri, 7 ros fucc somh o Bhairrai a menistir numha, cona shacarfaic’.<sup>236</sup> Thus, the description of the *meinistir* in the *Vita tripartita sancti Patricii* remains one of the most detailed, while the continuity of the materials associated with sacral containers can be traced from the ninth to the twelfth centuries.

While additional terms for sacral containers are used throughout the seventh to twelfth centuries and have already been explored by other scholars of Insular art, the term *capsa* and its derivatives have not been included in this exploration, despite their appearance in the inscription on the Moissac shrine.<sup>237</sup> Indeed, Adomnán’s *Vita sancti Columbae* records a scene in which St Columba places a blessing in a small casket (*capsellula*) made from pine wood, ‘Lugaido obsecundanti, et consequenter emigranti, Sanctus pineam tradit cum benedictione capsellam, dicens, “Benedictio, quae in hac capsellula continetur, quando ad Mauginam pervenies visitandam, in aquae vasculum intingatur eademque benedictionis aqua super eius infundatur coxam”’.<sup>238</sup> The diminutive *capsellula* is important in this context; it denotes a small container, although the exact size of *capsellae* is difficult to determine. In Adomnán’s writing, the casket could contain a small blessing and is presumably of a portable size, while in the *Vita sancti Comgalli* a king is described offering the saint

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<sup>236</sup> ‘He offered his church to Bairre, and received from Bairre his bronze reliquary containing the Host’, translation in *Bethada Náem nÉirenn: Lives of the Irish Saints*, ed. Charles Plummer, vol. 1 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1922), 16.

<sup>237</sup> Webster’s recent examination of the Moissac shrine still refers to the container as a chrismal, despite the presence of the term *capsa* on the shrine, Webster, ‘Anglo-Carolingian Chrismatory’, 66-8.

<sup>238</sup> ‘Lugaid obeyed, and was presently setting out, when the saint handed to him a box of pine-wood with a blessing, saying: ‘When you arrive to visit Maugin, let the blessing that is contained in this little box be dipped into a vessel of water, and let the same water of the blessing be poured over her hip’, translation in *Adomnán’s Life of Columba*, trans. Alan Anderson and Marjorie Ogilvie Anderson (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991), 103. Adamnanus Hiiensis, *Sancti Adamani benedictini abbatis de vita sancti Columbae libri tres*, ed. J. P. Migne, vol. 88, *Patrologia Latina* (Paris: Garnier et Migne, 1862), Col. 0745D-46A.

a box full of gold and silver, ‘Item rex iniquus venit ad sanctum Comgallum habens capsellam auro et argento plenam, ut offerret ei illam’.<sup>239</sup> Indeed, a casket akin to the Clonard shrine could hold enough silver or gold to contend with some of the smaller surviving hoards of precious Insular metalwork.<sup>240</sup> The saint eventually rejects this offer of precious metals, and the *vita* continues without recording what the casket itself was constructed from, as the contents of the casket and intent of the king are of greater thematic concern.

The popularity of small, personal sacral containers caused Alcuin of York some concern, as he wrote in a letter to Ethelhard, archbishop of Canterbury,

Multas videbam consuetudines, que fieri non debent. Quas tua sollicitudo prohibeat. Nam ligaturas portant, quasi sanctum quid estimantes. Sed melius et in corde sanctorum imitare exempla, quam in sacculis portare ossa; evangelicas habere scriptas ammonitiones in mente magis, quam pottaciolis exaratas in collo circumferre. Haec est pharisaica superstitio; quibus ipsa veritas impropere philacteria sua.<sup>241</sup>

Here Alcuin details his alarm about Ethelhard’s monks’ superstitious practice of wearing bones, presumably saints’ bones, and pieces of parchment with prayers written on them in bags (*sacculis*) carried around their necks. Alcuin of York does not refer to these containers as *capsella*, *ministerium*, *chrismal*, or *reliquarium*, but rather as phylacteries (*philacteria*), in an attempt to distance the practice he is admonishing from earlier ecclesiastical traditions. Still, these bags function in a

<sup>239</sup> ‘The same wicked king, having a casket full of gold and silver, came to Saint Comgall to offer it to him’, *Vitae Sanctorum Hiberniae*, vol. 2, Vita sancti Comgalli abbatis de Bennchor, 13.

<sup>240</sup> For more on silver in the Insular and Viking periods see, Mark Blackburn, ‘Gold in England During the ‘Age of Silver’ (Eighth-Eleventh Centuries)’, in *Silver Economy in the Viking Age*, ed. James Graham-Campbell and Gareth Williams (Walnut Creek: Left Coast Press, 2007), 55-98.

<sup>241</sup> ‘I saw many improper customs practiced, which it is your duty to stop. For they are carrying amulets, thinking them something sacred. It is better to copy the examples of the saints in the heart than to carry bones in bags, to have gospel teachings written in one’s mind than to carry them round one’s neck written on scraps of parchment. This is the superstition of the Pharisees, whom Christ has reproached for their phylacteries’, translation in *Alcuin of York, C. A.D. 732 to 804: His Life and Letters*, trans. Stephen Allott (York: William Sessions, 1974), 69; Alcuinus, *Epistolae Karolini aevi*, ed. Ernst L. Dümmler, vol. 4, Monumenta Germaniae Historica (Hannover: Hahn, 1895), 448.



similar way to the *capsa*, *meinistir*, and *chrismal* discussed above. Here we see the sacral contents occupying the same space, suggesting that sacral containers housing multiple items throughout their use-life were common enough to filter down into the practices Alcuin of York reported on.

## Conclusion

I began this chapter by examining Aldhelm's riddle on the chrismal and argued that, while the container it describes has strong correlations with Insular house-shaped shrines, the name of its subject—the chrismal—and the inscriptions found on Insular house-shaped shrines do not as closely match each other. Indeed, while Aldhelm originally provided the answer to his riddles as their titles, not every manuscript included these original glosses. Moreover, the inscriptions on Insular house-shaped shrines further include the term *capsa*, a Latin word for box, case, or casket with wider possible functions. Comparing the inscriptions on Insular house-shaped shrines with contemporary Insular and Continental shrines and artefacts further affirm that *capsae* could include containers that could not be opened by moving a lid and that the term could incorporate a variety of forms, contents, and functions.

To understand the functions and original contents of Insular house-shaped shrines, an examination of the primary sources must consider a wider range of terms, in particular, the Latin *chrismal* and *capsa* and the Old Irish *scrín* and *meinistir*. Examining Insular and Continental primary sources such as hagiography and penitentials clarifies that *chrismals* could contain relics, the Eucharist, and chrism oil, while the *capsa*, *scrín*, and *meinistir* were equally suited to carry any form of

sacral matter, with relics being mentioned more explicitly. Indeed, any one of these terms could serve as the answer to Aldhelm's riddle, and all are applicable to Insular house-shaped shrines. In regard to the material evidence, the object Aldhelm describes and indeed his specific poetic choices are highly applicable to Insular house-shaped shrines; however, the terminology used to discuss Insular house-shaped shrines as a group should allow for a wider understanding of Aldhelm's 'species...christi' that reflects the contents of the *sacculi* Alcuin of York mentions.



## Chapter 2

### **Submerged, Buried, Venerated, and Sold: Tracing the Provenances of Insular House-Shaped Shrines**

In order to more fully outline the known histories of Insular house-shaped shrines, how they were engaged with in later periods, and their modern use-lives, this chapter explores the antiquarian literature, archaeological context, and the accounts surrounding the provenances and find-spots of Insular house-shaped shrines. By examining these histories, find-spots, reentrances into public knowledge, and use-lives, we can more fully understand how they ‘come together to form a meta-domain having influence over human actions, perceptions, and modes of value creation’.<sup>242</sup> In particular, this chapter investigates how Insular house-shaped shrines were discovered and what their archaeological contexts or provenances reveal about their functions. This investigation goes beyond a basic biography of the shrines; rather, to more fully address the use-lives of the shrines, it considers the relationships of Insular house-shaped shrines to one another, the significance of other artefacts found with the shrines, and later additions and significant repairs to the shrines. How Insular house-shaped shrines are discussed and reported can inform us not only about their original contexts and functions but also about how later periods used the shrines to understand the past; therefore this chapter is divided into three sections based on provenance: the history of shrines associated with private collections; shrines which were found in fields, rivers, and loughs; and shrines connected to church treasuries.

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<sup>242</sup> Garrow and Gosden, *Technologies of Enchantment*, 26.

## Hereditary Owners or Private Collectors?

When artefacts are discovered in private collections, not only do they offer unique insights into the process of acquiring antiquities; they also highlight how the history surrounding the find-spot, known or theorised, can be used to endow objects with an almost mythic past. Standard questions relating to the acquisition of artefacts like Insular house-shaped shrines may be entailed, such as whether, within the modern period, the object was brought from abroad; whether it originated nearby; whether it can be linked to important historic figures or local events; and how fragmentary histories affected the social function of the shrine in later periods. This section addresses the discovery of five Insular house-shaped shrines, illustrating how some of their discoveries were used to link them to the early ‘Celtic Church’ and hereditary relic ownership, while also highlighting the limits of these narratives.<sup>243</sup> These objects are grouped based on a shared aspect of their provenances: they were all rediscovered in private collections or acquired by art dealers.

The Monymusk shrine, perhaps the most culturally significant and widely discussed of the Insular house-shaped shrines, can serve as a basis for discussing the social functions of Insular house-shaped shrines after their rediscoveries in the nineteenth century. Indeed, the discovery and display of the Monymusk shrine are deeply imbedded in the perception of the shrine as a relic of the early ‘Celtic Church’ and its association with St Columba. The Monymusk shrine was first displayed in 1859 at a meeting of the British Association for the Advancement of Science at

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<sup>243</sup> For more on the creation, complexities, and implications of the notion of Celticness in the early Church in Ireland see, Ian C. Bradley, *Celtic Christianity: Making Myths and Chasing Dreams* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1999).

Aberdeen.<sup>244</sup> There is no direct documentation of the specifics surrounding the discovery of the shrine within the House of Monymusk prior to the 1850s. In 1879, Anderson published his study linking the shrine to the *Breccbennach* of St Columba, Malcom of Monymusk, and Robert the Bruce.<sup>245</sup> In partial response to Anderson's paper, William MacPherson stated that the exact history of the shrine was not known and that Anderson relied too much on the name of the Monymusk family while not taking into account the shrine's discovery outside of Arbroath or the break in the lineage of the Monymusk title.<sup>246</sup> However, the legendary association between the shrine and St Columba was difficult to exorcise. In 2001 and 2015, David Caldwell and Richard Sharpe elaborated on MacPherson's critique. Caldwell demonstrates that within the Forglen charters, there is substantially less information to support Anderson's interpretation, while Sharpe argues that keeping the *Breccbennach* in Arbroath may have been politically advantageous and that no evidence suggests that it was ever moved to Monymusk.<sup>247</sup> Indeed, Anderson constructed his argument by drawing on the work of Joseph Robertson, who collected the various charters from Aberdeenshire in his book *Collections for the Shires of Aberdeen and Banff*, which were also used by William Reeves in his translation of the *Life of St Columba*.<sup>248</sup> However, the original sources do not specify what the *Breccbennach* was nor record any translation of the relic.

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<sup>244</sup> Caldwell, 'The Breccbennach of St Columba', 268.

<sup>245</sup> Anderson, 'Celtic Reliquary Exhibited', 431-35.

<sup>246</sup> William M. MacPherson, *Materials for a History of the Church and Priory of Monymusk* (Aberdeen: Taylor & Henderson, 1895), 1-5.

<sup>247</sup> Caldwell, 'The Breccbennach of St Columba', 270-4; Richard Sharpe, 'King William and the Brecc Bennach in 1211: Reliquary or Holy Banner?', *Innes Review* 66, no. 2 (2015): 190.

<sup>248</sup> Joseph Anderson, *Scotland in Early Christian Times* (Edinburgh: D. Douglas, 1881), 242-50; Joseph Robertson, *Collections for a History of the Shires of Aberdeen and Banff* (Aberdeen: The Spalding Club, 1843), 165-89; *Life of Saint Columba, Founder of Hy. Written by Adamnan, Ninth Abbot of that Monastery*, ed. William Reeves (Edinburgh: Edmonston and Douglas, 1874), lxxiii.

I would like to revisit Caldwell's extensive discussion of the provenance of the Monymusk shrine to question possible connections between the shrine and other Insular saints who are recorded in nearby place-names. While the local history of Monymusk can be used to connect the shrine to local saints and histories, Anderson specifically tied it to the more well-known St Columba. Cosmo Innes speaks to the issues present in writing on the foundation of the monastery at Monymusk and its legendary association with St Columba, 'of their manner of life and teaching, and the means of their support, we know little or nothing; of their discipline and subordination scarcely enough to found a useless controversy'.<sup>249</sup> While Monymusk does boast a ninth-century stone monument [Figure 48], incised with Pictish symbols and a cross, the monastery's history prior to the eleventh century is more complicated. Part of this issue lies in earlier antiquarians' and historians' assumptions, as seen with Reeves, 'the founder of the Church at Monymusk is said to have been Malcom Canmore, about the year 1080...the probability, however, is that he was a restorer, not a founder, and that, as in the subsequent case of Deir, he revived a decayed Monastery and enlarged its endowments'.<sup>250</sup> However, the Culdees are first recorded at Monymusk only after Malcom III's bounding charters and the Earl of Buchan's grant in 1130.<sup>251</sup>

While saint cults prior to the twelfth century are difficult to determine at Monymusk, place-name evidence such as the twelfth-century Eglismenythok or the

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<sup>249</sup> Cosmo Innes, *Sketches of Early Scotch History and Social Progress* (Edinburgh: Edmonston and Douglas, 1861), 91.

<sup>250</sup> William Reeves, *On the Céli-Dé, Commonly Called Culdees* (Dublin: Royal Irish Academy, 1864), 173.

<sup>251</sup> Robertson, *History of the Shires of Aberdeen and Banff*, 171-84; Alexander Low, 'Notices of the Localities in a Grant of the Lands of Keig and Monymusk, by Malcolm, King of the Scots, to the Church of St Andrews', *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland* 6 (1864-1866): 224-5.

Church of Nechtan 'Eccles Mo Nethoc', less than two kilometres north of Monymusk, provides some examples of other saints connected to the region. Following the Culdee's settlement of Monymusk, the list further includes SS John, Ninnian, Mary, Andrew, and Finnian.<sup>252</sup> Indeed, St Columba's connection to Monymusk is specifically located around the donation of the *Breccbennach* of St Columba along with the barony of Folgren, which were given to the Abbey of Arbroath between 1204 and 1211 by King William the Lion; in return, Arbroath was to carry the *Breccbennach* into battle in order to bless the Scottish army. On 18 January 1315, the abbot of Arbroath transferred the lands of Folgren to Malcolm of Monymusk, which then passed to the Irvines of Drum and then the Urries, Frasers, Forbeses, and finally the Grants around 1713.<sup>253</sup> In addition to there being no evidence to suggest that the *Breccbennach* was ever removed from Arbroath, it should also be noted that Monymusk priory was damaged by fires in the sixteenth century. Additionally, after the Reformation in 1560, the priory was left with the Forbes family, who built the nearby Monymusk House in 1584, which was extended in later periods.<sup>254</sup> If the connections between the *Breccbennach* and Monymusk shrine are as weak as recent scholars suggest, any of the above saints could be connected to the shrine, if the shrine either originated or was used in Monymusk.

Not only could the Monymusk shrine have originated near Monymusk or been tied to a saint other than Columba, but it also could have been brought to Monymusk by four other families before the Grants occupied the house. Still, Anderson's claims were so welcome that when the shrine was offered for sale in

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<sup>252</sup> 'Saints in Scottish Place-Names', Leverhulme Trust Project, <http://saintsplaces.gla.ac.uk/place.php?id=1350166381>, accessed August 28 2016.

<sup>253</sup> Caldwell, 'The Breccbennach of St Columba', 271-4.

<sup>254</sup> MacPherson, *History of the Church and Priory of Monymusk*, 207.



1933, the Prime Minister Ramsay MacDonald pledged his support for its acquisition so that it would remain in Scotland, so welcome that the shrine later appeared on a Clydesdale £20 banknote under Robert the Bruce [Figure 2].<sup>255</sup> Furthermore, upon hearing of Caldwell's 2001 publication on the shrine, Sir Archibald Grant of Monymusk simply said, 'Academics have to produce papers to justify their existence. I rest my case. I honestly think this is a load of rubbish'.<sup>256</sup> The association was so strong that Sir Archibald Grant willfully ignored up-to-date research in favour of an antiquarian interpretation from the 1880s simply because the present research refuted his family's suspect claim, one which technically did not hold universal acceptance within the period. In this sense, part of the Monymusk shrine's function since the nineteenth century is as a meaning-making device, a historic and cultural touchstone allowing the Grants to link their family to the ancient Monymusk title and allowing Anderson to use the shrine to lay the foundation for the theory that all Insular house-shaped shrines were reliquaries of the early Celtic Church.

The Emly shrine shares significant parallels with the Monymusk shrine, as both were used to historicise families to points predating either their ascension to the peerage or their occupation of their ancestral homes. The earliest explicit reference to the Emly shrine concerns a short note on its return to its then owner, William Monsell, Lord Emly, in the meeting notes of the Royal Irish Academy in 1871–2, '[a] Reliquary, the property of the Right Hon. William Monsell, M. P., which had been deposited in the Museum, has also been returned at the gentleman's request'.<sup>257</sup> Earlier references to William Monsell within the publications of the Royal Irish

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<sup>255</sup> Caldwell, 'The Breccbennach of St Columba', 267.

<sup>256</sup> Tom Peterkin, 'Bannockburn Relic Doubted by Museum Chief', *The Telegraph* 20 August 2001.

<sup>257</sup> 'Appendix: Minutes of the Academy for the Session 1871-72', lxvii.

Academy primarily note his attendance and the year he was made a fellow, 1842.<sup>258</sup>

In regards to his title, William Monsell was created a Baron in 1874, after which he used the honorific Lord Emly; he served as a member of parliament and was an influential member of the community as the Undersecretary of State for the Colonies, Postmaster General, and Vice Chancellor of the Royal University of Ireland. The Monsell family, while originally from London, moved to Limerick in 1612, and in 1690 they built their family home in Tervoe, Clarina, Co. Limerick just outside of the city of Limerick. The title was short lived and did not survive past William Monsell's son, Thomas William Gaston Monsell.<sup>259</sup>

Notably, enquiries into the history of the shrine beyond Lord Emly met obstacles as early as 1922. In E. C. R. Armstrong's discussion of the Emly shrine, he notes that it had been neither 'described nor illustrated' prior to his report.<sup>260</sup> Only Murphey's and Petrie's mention of the shrine is noted by Armstrong, although little is provided by these scholars beyond citing William Monsell as the owner of the shrine and that its shape is reminiscent of early Irish stone churches.<sup>261</sup> Notably, it appears as if other members of Monsell's family were not privy to the acquisition of the shrine, 'a letter to the present Lord Emly asking for information on the subject failed to elicit a reply. The Hon. Mrs. de la Poer, daughter of the Lord Emly by whom the reliquary was lent to the Academy inquired into the matter, but was unable to discover anything about the shrine'.<sup>262</sup> A contemporary brief biographic report on

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<sup>258</sup> 'Report of Council for the Year Ending March 16th, 1842', *Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy (1836-1869)* 2 (1840): 241.

<sup>259</sup> Matthew Potter, *The Life and Times of William Monsell, First Baron Emly of Tervoe* (Limerick: M. Potter, 1994), 1-24.

<sup>260</sup> Armstrong, 'Lord Emly's Shrine', 135.

<sup>261</sup> Petrie, *Christian Inscriptions in the Irish Language*, vol. 2, 163; Denis Murphy, 'The Shrine of St. Caillin of Fenagh', *The Journal of the Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland Fifth Series*, 2, no. 2 (1892): 151.

<sup>262</sup> Armstrong, 'Lord Emly's Shrine', 135.

William Monsell from 1865 does not mention any of his antiquarian dealings, and the letters of William Monsell held by the National Library of Ireland, while highlighting his political interests, religious leanings, and society dealings, provide no reference to the shrine, direct or indirect.<sup>263</sup> Despite the scant evidence pertaining to its history, the shrine was likely not a relic held by hereditary keepers, given that Monsell's daughter knew nothing of its history and that they were a London-based family prior to moving to Ireland. It is very significant that Mrs. de la Poer knew nothing of its acquisition, as during the same period similar Irish antiquities were being presented by their hereditary keepers, such as St Patrick's Bell, St Dymphna's Crosier, and the shrine of the Book of Dimma.<sup>264</sup> The most probable period in which Monsell acquired the shrine is likely the mid-nineteenth century, as the shrine appeared in the Great Industrial Exhibition in Dublin, 1853, in which a large collection of objects from both private and society collections were displayed.<sup>265</sup>

If the shrine was not previously owned by the family and was instead a purchase of Monsell's as the evidence suggests is probable, its purchase may have taken place between 1840 and 1853, as Monsell does not present the shrine to the Royal Irish Academy prior to the Exhibition.<sup>266</sup> No present evidence suggests that the shrine originated near Tervoe, and William Monsell notes his keen interest in

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<sup>263</sup> *Men of the Time: A Biographical Dictionary of Eminent Living Characters of Both Sexes*, (London: G. Routledge and Sons, 1865), 601; *William Monsell Letters*, National Library of Ireland, NRA 28043 Monsell, MS 8317-18, 8629, 19337, 20676-91, 20697, Acc 1075.

<sup>264</sup> Lucas, 'Social Role of Relics and Reliquaries', 23; Máire Mac Dermott, 'The Crosiers of St. Dymphna and St. Mel and Tenth-Century Irish Metal-Work', *Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy* 58 (1956/1957): 169; P. B. Phair, 'Betham and the Older Irish Manuscripts', *The Journal of the Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland* 92, no. 1 (1962): 75-8.

<sup>265</sup> *Official Catalogue of the Great Industrial Exhibition*, ed. J. Sproule (Dublin: John Falconer, 1854), 128-50; Fanning, 'Lodestone: Following the Emly Shrine', 12.

<sup>266</sup> Maurice Lenihan makes no mention of any reliquary or shrine connected to the Monsell family in their book on Limerick, which includes numerous references to the Monsells, Maurice Lenihan, *Limerick: Its History and Antiquities* (Dublin: James Duffy & Sons, 1866).

purchasing Catholic antiquities in his letters to his friend Cardinal Newman.<sup>267</sup> By the 1840s, Monsell had already converted to Catholicism and began meeting with Catholics in England and Ireland.<sup>268</sup> In 1845, he travelled to England with his brother-in-law, Adare, to meet with prominent Catholics such as Ambrose Phillips de Lisle, and to visit Catholic churches and monasteries.<sup>269</sup> After the death of his son on 16 July 1845, Monsell and Lady Anna Maria travelled to France, again visiting prominent Catholic figures and churches.<sup>270</sup> In the decade leading up to the Great Exhibition, Monsell's travels would have provided an opportunity to purchase the Emly shrine, perhaps even outside of Ireland.

Given Monsell's conversion to Catholicism, Unionist political beliefs, and recent ascension into the peerage, it is possible that he purposely did not divulge how he acquired the shrine so as to give his family the appearance of being one of the hereditary keepers of an ancient Irish artefact, despite their Protestant past. The Royal Irish Academy apparently saw no need to enquire about its provenance until after the first Lord Emly's death. The shrine's 'Irishness' was of such importance that when it was smuggled out of Ireland in the 1950s and sold to the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston, it was advertised as a metaphorical bridge between a mythologised Celtic past and segments of the local population that had links to the Irish Diaspora.<sup>271</sup>

Finally, the last three shrines of this section consist of the Brussels, London, and Bologna shrines, which are grouped together as little information about their

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<sup>267</sup> Potter, *Life and Times of William Monsell*, 25-6.

<sup>268</sup> Ibid.

<sup>269</sup> Ibid.

<sup>270</sup> Ibid.

<sup>271</sup> 'Ceisteanna—Questions. Oral Answers. Export of Sculptural Work, 9 May', *Dáil Éireann Debate* 157, no. 2 (1956).

provenances exists outside of their acquisitions. Beginning with the Brussels shrine

Ryan reports that

in 1946 or 1947, the Royal Museums for Art and History, Brussels, were presented with a bronze object by Mr. L. Lavens. The provenance of the object is not recorded. It was not originally identified as insular until noticed by both Mr. Liam de Paor and Mr. (now Professor) Etienne Rynne while visiting the Museum in the 1950s. On hearing that the writer was undertaking a study of the Tongres/Tongeren horn, both colleagues suggested that I should, while there, examine the object. It was made available to me through the kindness of Professor Jacqueline Lafontaine-Dosogne.<sup>272</sup>

At present, this is the only reference to the object that I have been able to secure.

Enquiries sent to Ryan were kindly returned and confirmed the location of the museum as the Musée du Cinquantaire, Musees Royaux d'Art et d'Histoire.<sup>273</sup>

However, subsequent enquiries to the museum uncovered neither the whereabouts of the panel nor any catalogue reference for the object, although Ryan notes that the panel was there at least during the 1980s.<sup>274</sup> In comparison, the London shrine panels are still on display at the British Museum; however, their acquisition record is also brief, 'two pieces of late Anglo-Saxon silverwork have recently been acquired by the Department of British and Medieval Antiquities (1954, 12–1): they were purchased from a dealer and nothing is known of their origin save that they formed part of a nineteenth-century collection'.<sup>275</sup> The collection's owner was Kenneth John Hewett, a dealer of antiquities and ethnographic art who supplied artefacts from the 1950s to 80s. Hewett drew on the art market growth in the decades following World War II, as artefacts displaced by bombs, refugees, and theft, many unrecognised, could be purchased inexpensively.<sup>276</sup> Perhaps this was how the London shrine fell into

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<sup>272</sup> Ryan, 'An Insular Gilt-Bronze Object', 57.

<sup>273</sup> Michael Ryan, E-mail to Samuel Gerace III, October 13, 2014.

<sup>274</sup> Alexandra de Poorter, E-mail to Samuel Gerace III, September 30, 2014.

<sup>275</sup> Wilson, 'Anglo-Saxon Casket', 47.

<sup>276</sup> Hermione Waterfield and J. C. H. King, *Provenance: Twelve Collectors of Ethnographic Art in England, 1760-1990* (London: Paul Holberton Publishers, 2009), 155-7.

Hewett's hands. In the absence of further information, the known history of the London shrine begins with Hewett presenting the British Museum with the pieces. Finally, the Bologna shrine's discovery is perhaps the briefest. In 1984, Blindheim notes in his original publication on the Bologna shrine that he knew of its existence for some thirty years prior.<sup>277</sup> Beyond that, the only information on the shrine's provenance is the Museo Civico Medievale's register which states,

1998 – scrignetto metallo a pietre, coperchio piramidale con sistema di sicurezza formata da catenelle. Sulla superficie dorata, da un lato lavoro a bulino con sei grossi castoni di cui due soli conservano le pietre; dall'altra parte, incisione e tre anelli a rilievo con treccio in smalto rosso. Alt. cm. 12, lug. cm. 11,7, larg. cm. 4,2. Collezioni Universitarie.<sup>278</sup>

The shrine was said to come from the Università di Bologna's collections, but details as to what specific collection are lacking. Regarding how the shrine found its way to Bologna, the city itself is deeply connected to travel and pilgrimage within the medieval period, and the shrine could have been carried to Bologna and then abandoned there, due perhaps to the death of its keeper or other unknown reasons.<sup>279</sup> While Blindheim and Isabel Henderson have commented on the ornamentation of the shrine and its potential connections to Pictish art, I would instead like to note a possible local connection between Bologna and Insular saints; specifically, Peter I, the bishop of Bologna (c. 616), was a pupil of St Columbanus who had a *familia* across northern Italy.<sup>280</sup> While this could offer a basis for why a shrine of Insular

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<sup>277</sup> Blindheim, 'A House-Shaped Irish-Scots Reliquary', 1.

<sup>278</sup> 'Metal casket with stones, pyramidal lid with safety system formed by chains. On the gilt surface, on one side an engraved work with six large casting of which only two retain their stones. On the other side, engraving and three embossed rings with interweaving in red enamel'. The same catalogue entry appears in Blindheim's study, *ibid.*, 15.

<sup>279</sup> Debra J. Birch, *Pilgrimage to Rome in the Middle Ages* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 1998), 48.

<sup>280</sup> Michael Richter, *Bobbio in the Early Middle Ages* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2008), 97-114; Blindheim, 'A House-Shaped Irish-Scots Reliquary', 5-29; Henderson, 'Shape and Decoration of the Cross on Pictish Cross-slabs', 212-18.

influence was found within a collection in Bologna, the shrine could also have been acquired by a collector from anywhere in Europe before it was placed in the Museo Civico Medievale.

Due to their truly fragmented histories, the London, Brussels, and Bologna shrines do not see the same reinterpretations that the Monymusk and Emly shrines show. Equally so, the two ridgepoles [Figures 7.A-8] that appear in Armstrong's report on the Emly shrine and the ridgepole recently acquired by the National Museum of Scotland [Figure 15] are without known provenances.<sup>281</sup> While nothing of the first two ridgepoles' histories are known, save that they were in the Royal Irish Academy's collection for 'some seventy years', Armstrong still links them to the eighth century, 'the best period of Irish art'.<sup>282</sup> Indeed, a wide examination of the shrines within this section highlights how the period in which Insular house-shaped shrines were coming to light was predominantly within the Celtic Revival of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, which may have influenced how the shrines were reported.

### **Lost to Waters, Set in Graves: Shrines in Rivers, Loughs, and Fields in Ireland and Norway**

This section will discuss objects with find-spots associated with rivers and loughs, as well as those found as grave deposits. I begin with the Lough Erne shrines, as their discovery in the late nineteenth century serves as a foundation for discussing

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<sup>281</sup> Armstrong, 'Lord Emly's Shrine', 137-9; Goldberg, 'Zoomorpher Firstbalken eines hausförmigen Reliquiars unbekannter Herkunft', 270.

<sup>282</sup> Armstrong, 'Lord Emly's Shrine', 137.

the limits of antiquarian reports. The earliest antiquarian reference to the Lough Erne shrines is Murphy's presentation to the Royal Irish Academy on 14 December 1892,

there is a small bay on the western shore of Lower Lough Erne, about midway between Enniskillen and Belleck. On a projecting point close by, Mr. Plunkett says he found some remains of a stone structure, surrounded by a square fosse, one side of which runs along the top of the steep bank that bound the shore of the lake. Tully Castle, built at the time of the Ulster Settlement, is quite near.<sup>283</sup>

Murphy describes how fishermen found the shrines when they became tangled in their lines, while further noting the find-spot as it was reported to Mr. Plunkett, the shrine's then-owner. Another version of the discovery of the shrines appears in J. E. McKenna's 1897 book on *Devenish (Lough Erne): Its History, Antiquities, and Traditions*. McKenna not only refers to the Lough Erne (A) shrine as shaped like 'a model, in miniature, of one of our ancient stone churches', but also notes that the shrine was specifically found at Abbey Point in twenty-four feet of water.<sup>284</sup> Paul Mullarkay, in a conservation report on the Lough Erne shrines from the National Museum of Ireland dated 18 June–25 July 1986, suggests, due to the presence of a wax-like substance found coated across the surface of the Lough Erne (A) shrine, that the shrines may have been intentionally deposited into the lough. Mullarkay discounts the possibility that the wax found on the Lough Erne (A) shrine was a result of being kept near beeswax candles, as the wax was found evenly coated across its surface; in addition, he also suggests the wax may have been applied to hide the tinning and gold from would-be robbers. Still, the fossilised remains of lake

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<sup>283</sup> Murphy, 'On a Shrine Lately Found in Lough Erne', 290.

<sup>284</sup> J. E. McKenna, *Devenish (Lough Erne): Its History, Antiquities, and Traditions* (Dublin: M. H. Gill & Son, 1897), 38.



insects imbedded in the surface of the wax-like substance on the escutcheons indicate that the wax was at least applied to the shrine before it was in the lough.<sup>285</sup>

While this could suggest the shrines were deposited intentionally into the lough near Abbey Point, McKenna's earlier report casts doubt on this theory. McKenna describes how the distance between the shore and the find-spot suggests that the shrine could not have been 'thrown from the shore to the place where it was found; and the monks, if sinking it to secure it from an enemy, would not have selected twenty-four feet deep of water to secret it'.<sup>286</sup> Still, a more thorough examination of Lower Lough Erne's water levels is called for before a definitive conclusion can be reached, as the water level would have changed since the tenth century. If the shrines were not respectfully deposited into the water or thrown from the distant shore, then two possibilities remain: accidental loss or deliberate abandonment while the shrines were being carried to or from the shore.<sup>287</sup> While the discovery of the shrines close to the shore may appear reminiscent of earlier Bronze and Iron age deposits, the general period of Insular house-shaped shrines lies outside of these practices.<sup>288</sup> Furthermore, while water sites sometimes feature as significant locations of the miraculous in medieval hagiography, as seen with the twelfth-century *Tractatus de Purgatorio sancti Patricii*'s description of pilgrimages to

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<sup>285</sup> Paul Mullarkay, 'Reg. No. 1901: 46. Irish Antiquities Division Conservation Record', (Dublin: National Museum of Ireland, 1986).

<sup>286</sup> McKenna, *Devenish*, 40.

<sup>287</sup> Helen Lanigan Wood, 'Ecclesiastical Sites in County Fermanagh from the Early Christian Period until the End of the Medieval Period', in *An Archaeological Survey of County Fermanagh: The Early Christian and Medieval Periods*, ed. Brian G. Scott, vol. 2 (Newtownards: The Northern Ireland Environment Agency, 2014), 637-42.

<sup>288</sup> Richard Bradley and Courtney Nimura, 'The Earth, the Sky and the Water's Edge: Changing Beliefs in the Earlier Prehistory of Northern Europe', *World Archaeology* 45, no. 1 (2013): 14; David Yates and Richard Bradley, 'Still Water, Hidden Depths: The Deposition of Bronze Age Metalwork in the English Fenland', *Antiquity* 84 (2010): 413-4; Veronica Strang, 'Common Senses: Water, Sensory Experience and the Generation of Meaning', *Journal of Material Culture* 10, no. 1 (2005): 115.

Lough Derge, Ireland, there is no direct evidence at present to suggest that the Lough Erne shrines were placed in the lough as a deliberate religious or ceremonial act.<sup>289</sup>

Still, what, if anything, can the history of Lower Lough Erne tell us about whence the shrine originated or why it was found in the lough under either of these conditions?

The most noticeable repair to the Lough Erne (A) shrine is the addition of a rectangular panel on the lid of the shrine that covers its lip [Figure 5.A], which Ó Floinn dates from the tenth century; therefore, it is likely that the shrine was not lost until at least this period.<sup>290</sup> Notably, the *Annals of Ulster*, written in the late fifteenth century by the scribe Ruaidhrí Ó Luinín on Belle Isle of Lower Lough Erne, covered the years 431–1540 CE.<sup>291</sup> The *Annals of Ulster* lists three specific Viking attacks near Lower and Upper Lough Erne:

837 Cella Locha Eirne n-uile im Chluaen Eoais 7 Daiminis do dilgiunn o genntibh...

...924 Longus di Gallaibh for Locha Eirne cor innriset innsi ind Locha 7 na tuatha imbi sancan. A n-derghe dind Loch isint shamhradh ar ciunn...

...933 Maidm ria Conaing m. Neil for Ultu oc Rubu Con Chongalt i torchratur .ccc. l paulo plus. Matudhan m. Aedha co Coicedh Erenn 7 co n-Gallaibh coro ortadur co Sliabh Betha siar 7 co Mucram fadhes conos-tarraidh Muirchertach m. Neill co remaib foraih 7 co forgaibset da .xx.it déc cenn 7 a n-gabail.<sup>292</sup>

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<sup>289</sup> Terje Oestigaard, 'Purification, Purgation and Penalty: Christian Concepts of Water and Fire in Heaven and Hell', in *Ideas of Water from Antiquity to Modern Times*, ed. Terje Tvedt and Terje Oestigaard, vol. 1 (London: I. B. Tauris, 2010), 315-6.

<sup>290</sup> *The Work of Angels*, 135-6.

<sup>291</sup> Daniel McCarthy, 'The Computus and the Annals of Ulster', *Peritia* 8 (1994): 78.

<sup>292</sup> 837 'The churches of all Loch Éirne, including Cluain Eóis [Clones] and Daiminis [Devenish], were destroyed by the heathens', 924 'A naval force of the foreigners went on Loch Éirne, and they ravaged the islands of the lake and the surrounding peoples, to and fro. They left Loch Éirne in the summer following', and 933 'Conaing son of Niall inflicted a defeat on the Ulaid at Ruba Con Chongalt, in which three hundred or somewhat more fell. Matudán son of Aed, with the forces of the Province of Ireland, and foreigners, went and plundered westward as far as Sliabh Betha and southward as far as Mucnám, and Muirchertach son of Niall came upon them and defeated them, and they lost twelve score and their spoils', translation in *Annals of Ulster*, 294, 376, 382.

The *Annals of the Four Masters*, which was compiled chiefly by Brother Mícheál Ó Cléirigh in 1624 and encompasses the Biblical Deluge to AD 1616, lists two additional instances of Viking invasion:

931 Goill do ghabháil for Lochaibh Eirne, co ro ionnrattar 7 go ro airccsettar iol-tuatha, 7 il-chealla go Loch Gamhna...

...934 'Amhlaibh Cendchairech cona Gallaibh do thocht ó Loch Eirne dar Breifne, 7 co Loch Ribh oidhche Nottlacc Mór rangadar Sionand, 7 ro bháttar.<sup>293</sup>

If the Lough Erne shrines were lost due to Viking activity, the tenth century appears to be a likely time, as it was one of the most turbulent periods for Lough Erne, although for many centuries the region was by no means completely stable. Until 818, Lough Erne acted as a boundary between the provinces of Connacht and Ulster, and after the defeat of Uí Creamhthainn by King Niall Caille of Aileach in 827, the populations of the lake came under the control of the Northern Uí Néill and the province of Ulster.<sup>294</sup> McKenna suggests that the shrines were abandoned violently after they were plundered, yet physical examinations of the two shrines show no sign of the larger shrine being forced open nor any damage beyond natural corrosion. Indeed, the discovery of the smaller Lough Erne shrine still inside the larger Lough Erne shrine suggests that the nested shrines were lost as a single artefact, unopened and with no signs of a hasty or violent examination and dismissal by invaders or thieves. Until more research is conducted on the water levels of Lower Lough Erne, accidental loss, therefore, appears the most likely possibility.

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<sup>293</sup> 931 'The foreigners took up their station upon the lakes of Erne; and they spoiled and plundered many districts and churches, as far as Loch Gamhna', 934 'Amhlaibh Cendchairech, with the foreigners, came from Loch Eirne across Breifne to Loch Ribh. On the night of Great Christmas they reached the Sinainn, and they remained seven months there; and Magh-Aei [Magh Adhair, Co. Clare] was spoiled and plundered by them', translation in *Annals of the Four Masters*, vol. 2, 628, 632.

<sup>294</sup> Katharine Simms, 'The Medieval Kingdom of Lough Erne', *Clogher Record* 9, no. 2 (1977): 127.

Regarding possible places of origin for the shrines, the antiquarian Mervyn Archdall, who resided at Castle Archdall just northeast across the lough from Abbey Point, mentioned several local early monastic settlements near Lower Lough Erne.<sup>295</sup> The closest early medieval monastery he identified is Devenish, where St Laserian or Molaise, sometime in the sixth century and before his death in 653, built a monastery that burned down in 1157.<sup>296</sup> Regarding other early monastic sites on Lower Lough Erne, Lady Dorothy Lowry-Corry argued that the presence of medieval sculptured stonework on White Island could link it to the monastery of Eo-inis and notes that the lack of continuity in the stonework found on the island corresponds to the Viking attacks in the ninth century and the island's later twelfth-century monastic settlement.<sup>297</sup> Lowry-Corry provided further reports on the Templenaffrin Church and other instances of carved stone on Boa Island and Lustymore Island, which are located directly across the lough from Abbey Point.<sup>298</sup> Additionally, stone sculptures dated from the seventh to eleventh centuries by Lowry-Corry are also found on White Island and at Killadeas, further testaments to the early medieval monastic communities that were located across Lower Lough Erne.<sup>299</sup> While sites at White

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<sup>295</sup> Mervyn Archdall, *Monasticon Hibernicum or a History of the Abbeys, Priories and Other Religious Houses in Ireland*, vol. 2 (Dublin: W. B. Kelly, 1876), 146-70.

<sup>296</sup> D. M. Waterman, G. W. Pearson, A. E. Griffith, and R. A. Wilson, 'St. Mary's Priory, Devenish: Excavation of the East Range, 1972-4', *Ulster Journal of Archaeology* 42 (1979): 34; Ó Floinn, 'Soiscél Molaise', 61-2.

<sup>297</sup> Dorothy Lowry-Corry, 'A Newly Discovered Statue at the Church on White Island, County Fermanagh', *Ulster Journal of Archaeology* 22 (1959): 63.

<sup>298</sup> For more on these sites see, Dorothy Lowry-Corry, 'Templenaffrin Church, County Fermanagh', *Ulster Journal of Archaeology* 1 (1938): 25-31; eadem, 'The Stones Carved with Human Effigies on Boa Island and on Lustymore Island, in Lower Lough Erne', *Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy* 41 (1932): 200-4.

<sup>299</sup> Ellen Ettlinger, '53. The Stone Sculptures on White Island, Lower Lough Erne, Co. Fermanagh', *Man* 53 (1953): 33; Dorothy Lowry-Corry, 'The Sculptured Stones at Killadeas', *The Journal of the Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland* Seventh Series, 5, no. 1 (1935): 26-33; James E. Canon M'Kenna and Dorothy Lowry-Corry, 'White Island, Lough Erne: Its Ancient Church and Unique Sculptures', *The Journal of the Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland* Sixth Series, 20, no. 1 (1930): 31-7.

Island, Killadeas, Inishmacsaint, and Devenish have some of the most extensive collections of stonework to survive, the Northern Ireland Sites and Monuments Record also lists Abbey Point as a possible monastic building.<sup>300</sup> Claire Foley and Ronan McHugh's 2014 report further describes the site—'from north, through east, to south the field is enclosed by a stone and clay bank 4 m wide, standing 70 cm above the interior and 40 cm above the exterior'—while local tradition asserts that the stones used for the lost abbey were incorporated into the fabric of Tully Castle.<sup>301</sup> So while any building at Abbey Point no longer exists, there is evidence for a structure and local tradition that links it to the widespread ecclesiastical network that existed within the Lough Erne region.

While the Lough Erne shrines could have been associated with numerous Insular saints, there is one *vita* that links a local saint to portable shrines. Of the fourteen saints connected to the Lough Erne region, St Molaise of Devenish has one *vita* that associated him with portable shrines and the region of Lough Erne specifically due to his monastery on Devenish Island.<sup>302</sup> The tenth-century *vita* of St Molaise, the *Beth Molaise Daiminse*, records how the saint exchanged relics with St Maedóg,

innisidh Molaise do uile mar do ghlé isin Róimh agus in gach inadh eile. fácaibh mo chuid acamsa do na haiscedhaibh tuais leat ó'n Róim bar Maodhóg. fáicfet imorro bar Molaise agus scáil ucht do chubail co tucar inn duit . ar séin scáilis Maodhóg. a ucht agus tairbiris Molaise inn .i. ní d'folt Muire . agus mughdorn

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<sup>300</sup> Alan T. McCleary, 'Geophysical Survey: Tully, Abbey Point, Co. Fermanagh', (Environment and Heritage Service, 1996).

<sup>301</sup> Claire Foley and Ronan McHugh, *An Archaeological Survey of County Fermanagh: The Early Christian and Medieval Periods*, ed. Brian G. Scott (Newtownards: The Northern Ireland Environment Agency, 2014), (Inv. 1220) 814-5.

<sup>302</sup> These saints are: St Ronan, St Sinell, St Senach, St Tighernach, St Molaise, St Mary, St Coeman, St Comgall, St Fergus, St Patrick, St Ninnidh, St Lasair, St Naile or Natalis, St Fainche as recorded by Dorothy Lowry-Corry, 'Ancient Church Sites and Graveyards in Co. Fermanagh', *The Journal of the Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland* 9, no. 1 (1919): 36.

Martain . ocus ní do thaisibh Póil ocus Pedair . ocus ní do thaisibh Luirint ocus  
Cleminn . ocus ní do thaisibh Steafáin mairtir.<sup>303</sup>

Unfortunately, the container is not explicitly described; however, the size of the relics placed within it as well as its position on the chest of St Maedóg does find strong parallels with Insular house-shaped shrines. Still, St Maedóg is not the only important Insular ecclesiastical figure connected to Lough Erne. St Columbanus studied with St Sinell, abbot of Cluaninis in Lough Erne and disciple of St Finnian of Clonard; Cluaninis is located less than thirty kilometres southeast of Tully Castle.<sup>304</sup> Additionally, the Killadeas cross-slab [Figures 49.A-C], dated by Macalister from the eighth century due to its dedicatory inscription, further emphasises the region's connection to early medieval monasteries and potential pre-Christian activity; the presence of multiple cup-shaped hollows on the back of the stone suggests that the stone may have acted as a bullaun stone prior to its ornamentation with a cross and its erection.<sup>305</sup> While the larger Lough Erne shrine (A) is later than St Molaise, could the smaller, possibly earlier, Lough Erne shrine (B) have belonged to the saint or been associated with him in later periods? As seen in the previous chapter, older ecclesiastical artefacts may become associated with a saint's cult in later periods. Still, the presence of SS Molaise and Columbanus, along with the Lough Erne shrines themselves, may be an indication of the importance of the area. While the history of Lough Erne is fragmentary, there were ongoing monastic communities

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<sup>303</sup> 'Molasius related to him how he had fared both in Rome and in every other place. 'Leave me my share of the gifts thou bringest from Rome,' said Maedóg. 'I will indeed,' Molasius answered, 'and open the bosom of thy frock that I may lay them in it for thee.' Then Maedóg opens out his bosom, and into it Molasius puts some of Mary's hair and of Martin's ankle-bone; somewhat of Paul's relics and of Peter's, a share of Laurence's relics and of Clement's, and of Stephen the martyr's relics', translation from *Silva Gadelica*, ed. Standish H. O'Grady, vol. 1 (London: Williams and Norgate, 1892), 32; *ibid.*, vol. 2: 30.

<sup>304</sup> *Sancti Columbani opera*, ed. G. S. M. Walker (Dublin: Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies, 1957), x-xxxiv.

<sup>305</sup> 'The Sculptured Stones at Killadeas', 31.

around the lough during the seventh to twelfth centuries, and indeed afterwards.

However, due to twelfth-century inter-church conflict, local population disruption in the seventeenth century, early medieval border disputes, and Viking incursions, there is evidence showing centuries of instability around the monastic communities of Lower Lough Erne.<sup>306</sup> These ongoing conflicts, the physical evidence of the shrines, the depth of the water that the Lough Erne shrines were found in, and the distance of that location from the shore line lends credence to the notion that the shrines were most likely accidentally lost.

Despite the Clonard shrine's fragmented state and equally fragmented history, it too may be traced to locations in Ireland with known monasteries and even specific saint cults. The earliest reference to the Clonard shrine appears in Wilde's 1861 *Catalogue of Animal Materials and Bronze in the Museum of the Royal Irish Academy*, which lists two objects, albeit without an accompanying illustration,

No. 36, an oblong thin plate, coated with tin, and decorated with intersecting lines on reverse side; 7 by 2 [inches]. Externally it had originally two circular bosses, with intermediate plates; one decorated cast boss, 2 [inches] wide, still remains; trumpet-pattern. It appears to have been part of a belt-ornament; and was found at Clonard, County Meath. No. 37, a thin ornamented plate, probably part of a similar article.<sup>307</sup>

As Ó Floinn observes, Wilde's measurements correspond directly to the face panel of the Clonard shrine, which was on display in the Museum of the Royal Irish Academy by 1846, as verified by a watercolour illustration by James Plunkett depicting the main panel and 'circular boss' [Figure 50].<sup>308</sup> In 1932, Mahr lists what is now known as the suspension strap of the Clonard shrine on plate 50 of his catalogue and Raftery

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<sup>306</sup> Cormac Bourke, 'Medieval Ecclesiastical Metalwork from the Diocese of Clogher', in *History of the Diocese of Clogher*, ed. Henry A. Jefferies (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2005), 25-30.

<sup>307</sup> Wilde, *Antiquities in the Museum of the Royal Irish Academy*, 641; Ó Floinn, 'House-Shaped Shrine from Clonard', 49.

<sup>308</sup> 'House-Shaped Shrine from Clonard', 52.

provides the following description of the strap under the section on ‘Hinges of house-shaped shrines’,

the strap portion contains the remains of the leather and the hinge position has on the back the usual two projecting rods, but the decoration on the front is much simpler than normal. It consists of two rather stylised, opposed birds’ heads, with necks from a border round the central panel. There are three settings, two now empty. The beaked bird’s heads have already been referred to in connection with Pl. 50:3, and the present hinge is of the same date—early eighth century. No. Loc. NMD. No reg. no.<sup>309</sup>

While the remainder of the Clonard shrine does not feature in Raftery’s description, he records that the hinge still held a fragment of leather, which helps to show by what means Insular house-shaped shrines were suspended or carried. Although, due to the epigraphy found on the strap, this leather portion may be a later addition.

Unlike Mahr and Raftery, Ó Floinn connects the hinge, quite literally, to the Clonard shrine by noting how the hinge fits snugly into the shrine’s side-panel, while also proposing two theories as to how the panels came into the museum’s possession: 1) through an unrecorded or lost individual donation to the Royal Irish Academy or 2) in a donation by the Board of Work’s Boyne drainage scheme of the 1840s.<sup>310</sup>

The former of these two possibilities appears to be more likely, as earlier works do not mention the panels, nor does there seem to be a connection to the Board of Works for the Clonard shrine specifically. Wilde’s earlier work published in 1849, *The Beauties of the Boyne*, only lists an early medieval bucket, presented by Dr Barker, that was found near Clonard during work on the Kinnegad riverbed; Wilde mentions other ‘ecclesiastical remains’ connected to the cathedral of Clonard, but gives no further information on these objects nor on counterparts, pre- or post-

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<sup>309</sup> Mahr and Raftery, *Christian Art*, 113.

<sup>310</sup> Ó Floinn, ‘House-Shaped Shrine from Clonard’, 49.



Christian.<sup>311</sup> Moreover, the list of artefacts presented by W. T. Mulvany to the Royal Irish Academy on behalf of the Board of Works drainage of the Boyne in 1850–3 does not mention Wilde’s ‘oblong plate’, although they do list other artefacts included in Wilde’s catalogue.<sup>312</sup> Amongst the list of donations to the Royal Irish Academy, recorded from 1787 to 1901, no object from or outside of Clonard corresponds to Wilde’s description or Plunket’s illustration. Given that Wilde explicitly referred to the donations from the Board of Works throughout his catalogues, as did the antiquarian reports to the Royal Irish Academy, Wilde’s catalogue is likely the oldest documentation of the panels. This is due in no small part to the state of the Royal Irish Academy’s collection in 1858. As James Graves describes it,

a vast chaotic collection was formed—rich in every department of Irish antiquities; but in the absence of arrangement, classification, or catalogue, almost totally useless for the purposes of study or comparison. There was much talk about a catalogue, indeed, and constant apologies for its non-appearance are on record in the Proceedings of the Academy, but without any practical result. Time, too, was fast running on, and as much of the knowledge concerning the treasures of the Museum was traditional, it must, if unrecorded, be in a few short years lost for ever.<sup>313</sup>

If the Clonard shrine originated in the suggested region, the early medieval complex that once stood in Clonard is the closest and, within the early medieval period, the most prominent potential location for the shrine’s origin or keeping. Here,

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<sup>311</sup> W. R. Wilde, *The Beauties of the Boyne and its Tributary, the Blackwater* (Dublin: James McGlashan, 1949), 66.

<sup>312</sup> W. T. Mulvany, William Fraser, Samuel Roberts, Thomas J. Mulvany, and John O’Flaherty, ‘Appendix No. V: Notices of Antiquities Presented to the Royal Irish Academy by W. T. Mulvany, Esq., M. R. I. A., on the Part of the Commissioners of Public Works’, *Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy (1836-1869)* 5 (1850-1853): xxxi-lxvi; ‘On Several Collections of Antiquities Made by the Officers of the Board of Works, and Presented to the Academy (Continued)’, *Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy (1836-1869)* 5 (1850-1853): 243-45; W. R. Wilde, ‘Remarks on Donations Presented’, *Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy (1836-1869)* 7 (1857-1861): 159-62.

<sup>313</sup> James Graves, ‘What We Learn from Wilde’s “Catalogue of the Antiquities in the Museum of the Royal Irish Academy”’, *The Journal of the Kilkenny and South-East of Ireland Archaeological Society* 2, no. 1 (1858): 138.

St Finnian of Clonard established his monastic school in 520, which would go on to produce the ‘Twelve Apostles of Ireland’: SS Brendan of Clonfert, Brendan of Birr, Canice of Agnavoe, Ciaran of Clonmacnoise, Ciaran of Saighir, Columba of Iona, Columba of Terry Glass, Lasserian mac Nadfraech, Mobhí of Glasnevin, Molaise of Devenish, Ninni of Inishmacsaint, Ruadan of Lorrha, and Sinell of Cluaninis; perhaps this may point to a connection between the Clonard and Lough Erne shrines as there is a link between Clonard and Lower Lough Erne through the figures of SS Molaise of Devenish and Sinell of Cluaninis.<sup>314</sup> Clonard was established as a diocese in 1111 at the Synod of Rathbreasail; in 1152, at the Synod of Kells, its boundaries were formally established, and the bishop of Meath’s seat was placed there until it was moved to Trim.<sup>315</sup> The site’s archaeological inventory is limited, but as Michael Moore notes, near the modern town of Clonard, there is an early Christian monastic site that acted as the diocesan centre of Meath until 1202, when Simon de Rocheford moved the diocesan seat to Newtown Trim.<sup>316</sup> The location of Clonard—near the Clonard River, the River Boyne, and an ancient road—was a strategic location within the early medieval period, although due to tensions between the southern and northern Finnian *paruchia* and the fact that Clonard was located at the border of Lagen, Meath, and Brega, it would later become embroiled in a series of conflicts, about which the annals do not go into detail.<sup>317</sup>

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<sup>314</sup> Peter Galloway, *The Cathedrals of Ireland* (Belfast: University of Belfast, 1992), 44-5; *Bethada Náem nÉirenn: Lives of the Irish Saints*, vol. 1, 93-8; *ibid.*, 2: 96-102.

<sup>315</sup> Michael J. Moore, *Archaeological Inventory of County Meath* (Dublin: The Stationery Office, 1987), (Inv. 1326), 127.

<sup>316</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>317</sup> Kathleen Hughes, 'The Cult of St Finnian of Clonard from the Eighth to the Eleventh Century', *Irish Historical Studies* 9, no. 33 (1954): 21.

Ó Floinn notes that the Clonard shrine's suspension hinge appears to be a significantly later repair, while the numerous perforations on the panels further suggest the shrine possibly had a long use-life.<sup>318</sup> Indeed, the Clonard shrine may be one of the many relics associated with Clonard to which the Irish *Betha Fhindéin Clúana hEraid* from the Book of Lismore refers, although the *vita* does not go into detail about the specifics of these relics.<sup>319</sup> If the shrine was found in Clonard as Wilde's catalogue states, then the early medieval abbey at Clonard is a likely place of origin, especially given its proximity to two rivers; water damage appears across the surfaces of the Clonard fragments, and given the flooding of the region, it is not unlikely that the shrine was found within or near the Boyne or, more likely, the Clonard, which runs adjacent to the early monastic site and offers a closer find-spot [Figure 51].<sup>320</sup>

While the Clonard shrine was rediscovered in a museum's collection and can be traced somewhat comfortably to a physical location, the history of the Shannon shrine is more complicated, due to incomplete records. Publications on the Shannon shrine began with an 1880 notice by Professor John Duns to the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland. While Duns spends much of the notice outlining the shrine's ornamentation and its relation to similar artefacts, of primary interest to this discussion is Duns' description of the shrine's discovery, 'it was found some years ago associated with bronze implements of various shapes in the Shannon, in a bed of silt about a foot thick, lying above gravel, underneath which many stone implements

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<sup>318</sup> Ó Floinn, 'House-Shaped Shrine from Clonard', 52.

<sup>319</sup> *Lives of the Saints from The Book of Lismore*, ed. Whitley Stokes (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1890), 82-3, 230.

<sup>320</sup> *Clonard Written Statement*, (Clonard: Meath County Council, 2013).

were discovered'.<sup>321</sup> Unfortunately, Duns says no more in his notice; however, he provides some clues as to the shrine's original find-spot, which can be deduced through earlier antiquarian literature.

A professor of Natural Science at New College, Edinburgh from May 1864, Duns produced numerous notices for the Royal Society of Edinburgh (fellow from 1859) and the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland (fellow from 1875), as well as religious studies such as his *Science and Christian Thought* in 1878. After his meetings with Sir James Y. Simpson, Duns developed his interest in antiquarian subjects.<sup>322</sup> Notably, when Duns discusses the discovery of the Shannon shrine, he notes that it was found 'some years ago' but does not refer to this find specifically, although his tone suggests that its associated objects would have at least been familiar to his audiences. Given his connections to both the Royal Society of Edinburgh and the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland, and given the shrine's discovery in the River Shannon in Ireland, it is possible to find reference to one find-spot matching Duns' description.

Duns's first notice to the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland describes a similar circumstance surrounding the discovery of bronze implements in the River Shannon,

the specimen now on the table was found in Ireland in 1843. In that year, while the work of deepening the Shannon for the improvement of the navigation at Keelogue Ford was being carried on, the contractors dammed off a portion of the river, one hundred feet in width, and seven hundred feet in length. The loose material at the surface of the bed of the river consisted of gravel and sand two feet in thickness. At the bottom of this many stone implements were found, specimens of which are in the New College Museum. Bronze implements were also found, about a foot of silty matter intervening between them and the stone forms. Among the bronze weapons were four socketed celts, three of which are mentioned in the Catalogue of

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<sup>321</sup> Duns, 'Ancient Celtic Reliquary', 286.

<sup>322</sup> *Memoir of Sir James Y. Simpson* (Edinburgh: Edmonston and Douglas, 1873), 420.

the Antiquities of the Irish Academy; the fourth I have the pleasure of showing to the Society.<sup>323</sup>

Duns' earlier report on the stone and bronze celts offers a similar description of a find-spot on the River Shannon that matches that of the Shannon shrine.

Interestingly, J. Long of Limerick complains in the October 1870 meeting that

it may also be remarked that the collection of these remains found in the Shannon was not the result of any considerable number being found at a particular shoal. They are the aggregate of a few, more or less, from each of the various shoals that were deepened, but no exact particulars of the locality where each was found appear to have been given by the persons presenting them to the Royal Irish Academy, an omission which ought not to have occurred.<sup>324</sup>

The collection was in disarray, and in the early publications of antiquarian societies in both Dublin and Edinburgh, Duns' reference to a 'foot of silt' is found only in one earlier notice. While Wilde's catalogue does not include any reference to shrines, he was in the midst of producing the following volume that would have outlined the Museum's collection of silver and ecclesiastical artefacts when he died. After Wilde's death, Armstrong published Wilde's manuscript on the silver collection, which contains references to crosiers, chalices, and patens, but no reference to anything like the Shannon shrine, although in his miscellaneous section, there are references to silver boxes, which draw on Mallet's report on his experiments on the chemical composition of antiquities within the collection in 1849.<sup>325</sup>

If we take this site as the Shannon shrine's find-spot, then the Shannon shrine, much like the Bologna shrine, was discovered in a location strongly

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<sup>323</sup>Notes on Some Articles Exhibited to the Meeting, Viz., -A Bronze Spearhead, a Small Unlooped Socketed Celt, a Sword-Shaped Stone from Shetland, and a Tripod Bronze Pot', *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland* 11 (1874-1876): 170.

<sup>324</sup>'Proceedings, October Meeting', *The Journal of the Royal Historical and Archaeological Association of Ireland* Fourth Series, 1, no. 1 (1871): 266.

<sup>325</sup>E. C. R. Armstrong, 'Catalogue of the Silver and Ecclesiastical Antiquities in the Collection of the Royal Irish Academy, by the Late Sir William Wilde, M.D., M.R.I.A', *Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy. Section C: Archaeology, Celtic Studies, History, Linguistics, Literature* 32 (1914): 310-12.

associated with travel. As Richard Griffith remarked, ‘this ford must have been the main pass between the northern portion of the county of Clare, and the southern portion of the county of Galway, and the counties of Tipperary, King’s County, &c. &c’.<sup>326</sup> In the absence of further information, the Shannon shrine seems to have been found in the Keelogue Ford of the River Shannon [Figure 52] sometime in 1843, along with an assortment of celts, small hoe- or axe-like objects used for cutting and chopping.

Unlike the aforementioned shrines, the find-spot of the Clonmore shrine is not in dispute; a metal detectorist near the village of Tamnamoe, Co. Dungannon discovered four panels of the shrine in Clonmore, Co. Armagh in 1990.<sup>327</sup> Bourke suggests that the plates were ‘scattered’ in the soil after the 1970s dredging of the Blackwater River.<sup>328</sup> In 1991, a ‘second long wall’ plate of the shrine, two related pieces, and perhaps the mount to a satchel were discovered during excavation by the Ulster Museum.<sup>329</sup> Due to the similarities in use of ornament and material, the two mounts may, in fact, be the lost suspension straps of the Clonmore shrine [Figures 10.B, H, I]. In either case, the mounts represent the only other objects directly connected to the Clonmore shrine via their find contexts, beyond iron-age axe heads found in the vicinity during earlier excavations.<sup>330</sup>

The present Clonmore Townland is part of the modern civil parish of Killyman, and the portion of this parish that was in Co. Armagh was called Daire

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<sup>326</sup> Richard Griffith, ‘On a Collection of Antiquities, Presented by the Shannon Commissioners to the Museum of the Academy’, *Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy (1836-1869)* 2 (1840): 313.

<sup>327</sup> Bourke, ‘The Blackwater Shrine’, 103; ‘Antiquities from the River Blackwater IV’, 27-30. The SMR grid reference for the site is Clonmore H858 568, just at the point where the two rivers meet.

<sup>328</sup> ‘Finding the Clonmore Shrine’, in *Lost and Found II: Rediscovering Ireland’s Past*, ed. Joe Fenwick (Dublin: Wordwell, 2009), 15-18.

<sup>329</sup> ‘The Blackwater Shrine’, 103.

<sup>330</sup> ‘Antiquities from the River Blackwater III, Iron Axe-Heads’, *Ulster Journal of Archaeology* 60 (2001): (No. 23-6) 90.

Bruachais.<sup>331</sup> The *Annals of Ulster* notes in 689 the ‘Obitus Do Cinni Daire Murchaisi’, and Neill suggests the report of a cross at Mullenakill indicates that it was the site of an early monastery.<sup>332</sup> Unfortunately, only a portion of the site remains, predominately the graveyard, as Ashe noted in 1703, ‘the church is now ruined and nothing remains of it but the old walls or foundations and a large stone cross’.<sup>333</sup> The earliest patron saints associated with the area were St Aedan of Daire Bruchaisi, who appears in the *Martyrology of Tallaght*, and St Mochonna of Daire from the *Martyrology of Donegal*.<sup>334</sup> Killyman is just upstream from the Clonmore Shrine’s find-location, and while there has not been extensive archaeological work in the vicinity, the fine metalwork and the blue glass used in the Clonmore shrine’s construction suggests that even if the shrine was held for any period by a member of the region, its closest place of origin may have been Armagh, just sixteen kilometres south of Temnamore.

Few excavations of early Christian settlements in Co. Armagh have been conducted, and those that have been excavated have produced a limited number and range of artefacts.<sup>335</sup> Most of these artefacts consist of Souterrain ware, wooden stakes, and other fragments of a limited range at Corliss, Kilmore, and Ballydoo; however, evidence of glass working, a high-status early-Christian activity, was also

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<sup>331</sup> Ken Neill, *An Archaeological Survey of County Armagh* (Northern Ireland Environment Agency: Belfast, 2009), 317.

<sup>332</sup> ‘Death of Do-Chinne of Daire Brugais’ translation in *Annals of Ulster*, 152; *Archaeological Survey of County Armagh*, (Inv. 700) 539.

<sup>333</sup> *A View or an Account of the Lands of the Archbishop of Armagh by Thomas Ashe*, PRONI, Archive of the Archdiocese of Armagh, T.848.

<sup>334</sup> [March 29] *The Martyrology of Tallaght*, ed. Richard Irvine Best and Hugh Jackson Lawlor (London: Harrison and Sons, Ltd., 1931), 28; [March 8, May 13] *The Martyrology of Donegal: A Calendar of the Saints of Ireland*, ed. James Henthorn Todd and William Reeves, trans. John O'Donovan (Dublin: Irish and Archaeological and Celtic Society, 1864), 71, 127.

<sup>335</sup> *Archaeological Survey of County Armagh*, 272.

found at Ballydoo.<sup>336</sup> Numerous scholars attest to Armagh's importance within the early medieval period as a site of St Patrick's relics, and N. B. Aitchison suggests that the organisation of the city's centre within concentric rings, which were divided into four quadrants, reflected the Roman relics St Patrick received and thus reflected Rome itself, 'Dodeochaid angel coPatraic ind Ardmachi. "indiu", olse, "forlaiter taissi innanapstal iRoim fochetharaird indomain"'.<sup>337</sup>

Notably, the Shanmullagh or Ballycullen hoard, found near the River Blackwater near Charlemont, less than eight kilometres south of Temnamore, offers further insights into the region's wealth. The hoard consisting of enamelled plates, lead weights, gold and silver ornaments, and a variety of other objects, most notably fragments of ridgepoles from Insular house-shaped shrines [Figures 11.A-13.B], is presently interpreted as the cargo of a ninth-century 'Hiberno-Viking' metalworker that spread across a small area of the Blackwater, presumably when it accidentally fell into the waters.<sup>338</sup> While the discovery of the find-spot of the Clonmore shrine provides limited insight, the presence of a ninth-century hoard consisting of Insular house-shaped shrines fragments suggests that Insular house-shaped shrines were more prevalent than their current number suggests, especially in this region. Moreover, the discovery of these four shrines directly near waterways further highlights the wide-spread movement during the early medieval period by Viking

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<sup>336</sup> O. Davies, 'Excavations at Corliss Fort', *Journal of the County Louth Archaeological Society* 9, no. 4 (1940): 341; Angelique Day and Patrick McWilliams, *Ordnance Survey Memoirs of Ireland Vol 1: County Armagh, 1835–8* (Belfast: Institute of Irish Studies, 1990), 60-2; Malachy Conway, 'Survey and Excavation in the Navan Environs with 'Time Team': Creeveroe, Haughey's Fort, and Ballydoo', *Emania* 20 (2006): 41-51.

<sup>337</sup> 'An Angel came to Patrick in Armagh. 'Today', saith he, 'the relics of the apostles are divided in Rome throughout the four quarters [of the globe]''', translation in *The Tripartite Life of Patrick*, vol. 1, 238-9; N. B. Aitchison, *Armagh and the Royal Centres in Early Medieval Ireland: Monuments, Cosmology, and the Past* (Woodbridge: Boydell and Brewer Ltd., 1994), 189-232.

<sup>338</sup> Bourke, 'Antiquities from the River Blackwater IV', 24; *Patrick: The Archaeology of a Saint* (Belfast: H.M.S.O., 1993), 24-39.



invaders and Insular ecclesiastics and the notion that these shrines were carried by travellers.

Finally, the last three shrines of this section were each found buried in fields in Norway; all can be traced to specific find-spots. The Melhus shrine was discovered close to the eastern side of the 'road from Namsos', approximately 100 metres north of a farm, 'in the autumn of 1906 in a large grave-mound at Melhus in the parish of Overhallen, in Namdalen Valley, about 25 kilometres east of the town of Namsos. The shrine forms part of the burial equipment of a grave, the single objects and sent the Museum of the Royal Society of Sciences at Trondheim'.<sup>339</sup> Petersen notes that he was not able to examine the remains of the mound until the summer of 1907; however, an earlier collection of artefacts from the mound was presented to the Museum in 1902. Unfortunately, the exact locations of these objects within the mound were not recorded, although a complete list of them does survive:

1. An iron spear-head
2. A pair of scissors
3. A bronze fibula
4. Two bronze 'incomplete' bow-shaped brooches
5. Two bronze fragments, ornamented
6. 136 glass beads, 1 silver wire bead
7. An iron bar
8. A slate whetstone
9. The Melhus shrine, which was itself found inside a wooden box
10. A whale-bone plate
11. Weaver's reed of whalebone
12. Iron sword
13. Iron sword fragment and wooden sheath

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<sup>339</sup> Petersen, 'Reliquary Found in a Norwegian Burial-Mound', 4.

14. Iron axe-head
15. Iron shield-boss
16. 'handle-formed' iron implement
17. Fragment of spindle whorl
18. Small fragments of iron objects including bindings and ring
19. A number of clinch-nails

During its archaeological investigation, the mound was found to be not only part of a natural ridge but also the location of two separate boat burials. The first boat burial interred a boat, objects, and bodies of the deceased inside the mound, while at a later date a second boat burial took place on top of the mound; this second boat was set alight as evidenced by charcoal and burnt bones.<sup>340</sup> No physical remains from the first burial were found in the mound, but Petersen suggests that it held two bodies, a man and a woman, due to the presence of weapons and weaving tools.

The Setnes shrine was discovered in May 1961 during ground-levelling operations on a farm in Setnes, Grytten parish. Nearby, the river Rauma flows into the Romsdal fjord, while upstream additional Viking finds have been discovered. The Videnskapsselskapets Oldsaksamling was able to investigate the site and concluded that 'some pieces of wood with nails were noticed near the objects, which lay partly in line, thus clearly indicating a burial in an unburnt boat; there was, in fact, no burnt layer and no trace of charcoal'.<sup>341</sup> As there was 'no indication of a mound' at the site, it appears that the boat was laid down into the ground and covered with soil and perhaps a marker. Given that grave mounds were common in the region before their levelling in the 1870s, Marstrander suggests that a mound would have been likely.

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<sup>340</sup> Ibid.

<sup>341</sup> Marstrander, 'Irish Reliquary and Hanging Bowl found in Romsdal', 8.

While the human remains do not survive, a brief list of the objects can be provided:

1. The Setnes shrine
2. A bronze hanging bowl
3. Bronze-covered weight, cylindrical, lead, with champlevé design in yellow, red, and green
4. Lead weight with bronze covering, in the form of a quadruped
5. Fragment of a crosier, half of a bronze knop
6. Balance of tinned bronze
7. 21 beads from a necklace
8. A Kufic coin: 'a dirhem, minted in Baghdad by the Abbasi Caliph, Al-Mansur, in the 151<sup>st</sup> year of the Hadsjra, that is A.D. 768–
- 9...worn as an ornament'<sup>342</sup>
9. Silver pendant made from 'native' silver
10. Large trefoil brooch of gilt silver
11. Fragment of a gilt brooch
12. A small piece of silver, one end rolled up into a small knot
13. Spindle-whorl of greenish stone, almost spherical

Marstrander notes that the appearance of beads and the spindle-whorl indicates it may have been a female grave and that the lack of weapons does not suggest it was either a double-grave or a man's grave, although Marstrander does warn that scales are found predominantly in male graves.

The final Insular house-shaped shrine of this section was discovered by a metal detectorist in a field near Hokksund. Investigations at the site are ongoing, and specifics on the location are not currently being released, so as to preserve the site from unwanted attention. It appears likely, however, that the Hokksund shrine will be

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<sup>342</sup> Ibid., 36.

connected to a Viking grave, as is the case with the above-mentioned shrines found in Norway.

Regarding the above shrines found in Ireland, all are associated with waterlogged environments, likely due to the influence of public works on the archaeological record, while the shrines found in Norway are all potentially associated with grave goods. In addition, the Lough Erne (A-B), Clonmore, and Clonard shrines all have find-spots near early medieval ecclesiastical sites connected to local saints, suggesting that the shrines did not necessarily have to originate far from their find-spots. Also, while the find-spot of the previously discussed Emly shrine is not known, a 1990/1 conservation report from the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston records that the shrine was ‘at least partially waterlogged’ before its pre-1950s conservation, suggesting it too may have been found in a similar environment.<sup>343</sup> Moreover, while the three shrines found in Norway are each potentially associated with female Viking graves, so too do they help in dating some Insular house-shaped shrines from approximately the eighth century, as the Kufic coin found with the Setnes shrine, dating from the 760s, provides an archaeological means of ascribing a date to the shrine beyond the complications present in stylistic dating.<sup>344</sup>

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<sup>343</sup> ‘Research Laboratory: Treatment Report, 52.1396’, (Boston: Museum of Fine Arts, 1990/1).

<sup>344</sup> For more on the complications of stylistic dating and recent shifts see, Netzer, ‘Style: A History of Uses and Abuses’, 169-77; Ryan, ‘Metalwork in Ireland from the Later Seventh’, 43-58.

## From Churches, Abbeys, and Tombs: Shrines in Ecclesiastical Treasuries

Finally, this third section consists of shrines connected to churches and church treasuries. The Ranvaik shrine, the only shrine in this section from an unknown church, entered into the Danish Royal Collection of Art in 1737 and in 1845 was transferred from the Royal Cabinet of Curiosities to the National Museum of Denmark.<sup>345</sup> The original catalogue noting this transfer still survives at the National Museum; however, the only information in the catalogue about the shrine is that the shrine came from Norway, has an inscription on its base, and was said to have been found in an unnamed church under unspecified means. No further information appears in The Royal Danish Kunstkammer of 1737, the only other record of the shrine's original provenance.<sup>346</sup>

Petersen offers an interesting, if speculative, description of the shrine's history based on the shrine's inscription, which contained a Viking name, possibly female,

from the fact that it has been in the possession of a Norwegian woman, it may further be concluded that in the Viking age and probably in a later part of this period it has been carried to Norway as Viking's spoil. After the introduction of Christianity in this country, the shrine, the destination of which has not been forgotten, is then transferred to a church and provided with new relics.<sup>347</sup>

As the Melhus and Setnes shrines were also discovered in Viking women's graves, the inscription on the Ranvaik shrine and its link to a female personal name suggests that the shrine's use-life likely included use as a container by a Viking woman. This does not, however, elucidate the social functions of the shrine pre-interment. To

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<sup>345</sup> *The Work of Angels*, 138.

<sup>346</sup> Wamers, *Insularer Metallschmuck*, 105-6.

<sup>347</sup> Petersen, 'Reliquary Found in a Norwegian Burial-Mound', 16.

develop on Petersen's work requires looking to the shrine's present state to elucidate how it came to be included in a church's treasury.

Notably, the Ranvaik shrine is well preserved; it lacks the level of decay seen with other waterlogged and buried shrines. Was it possible that the Ranvaik shrine was never buried as a grave good, or only saw minimal time in such conditions? Some Christian activity was present in Norway when the shrine's tenth-century epigraphy was inscribed; there is evidence for tenth-century Christian burials in Romsdal and Oslo, and so the shrine may have come to Norway with some of these early Christians.<sup>348</sup> While the identity of earlier Anglo-Saxon missionaries to Norway is uncertain, by the later eleventh century, three bishoprics were established in Oslo, Bergen, and Nidaros, near Trondheim.<sup>349</sup> While at present it is unknown if the Ranvaik shrine was stolen or lost, given the shrine's state of preservation, it may have been carried to Norway by such unnamed missionaries, lost to pagan owners, and later secured with hereditary keepers. It is known for certain, however, that the shrine was used as a reliquary in later periods. The National Museum of Denmark records nearly forty separate relics, some dating from the fourteenth century, that were held in the shrine; these relics range from *brandae* to fragments of bone to a supposed piece of the True Cross [Figure 19.J].<sup>350</sup>

For the following shrines, additional information outside of museum catalogues substantiates their connections to churches. A clear and precise history of

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<sup>348</sup> For more on Christians in early medieval Norway see, Dagfinn Skre, 'Missionary Activity in Early Medieval Norway. Strategy, Organization and the Course of Events', *Scandinavian Journal of history* 23, no. 1-2 (1998): 1-19; Hans-Emil Lidén, 'From Pagan Sanctuary to Christian Church the Excavation of Mære Church in Trøndelag', *Norwegian Archaeological Review* 2, no. 1 (1969): 3-21.

<sup>349</sup> Michael Lapidge, John Crook, Robert Deshman, and Susan Rankin, *The Cult of St Swithun* (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 2003), 56.

<sup>350</sup> Blindheim, 'The Ranuaik Reliquary', 203-4.

the Amiata shrine is clouded by a lack of documentary evidence, although it is one of the shrines connected to a church with an Insular saint cult.<sup>351</sup> St Columbanus is the only Irish saint mentioned in the consecration of the abbey.<sup>352</sup> Although the Amiata shrine was found to contain a fragment of human bone, no further documentary evidence links it to a specific saint, and the corporeal relic inside the Amiata shrine cannot be definitively linked to St Columbanus. Tradition attributes the founding of Abbazia di San Salvatore near Monte Amiata to the Lombard King Ratchis in 743; today the abbey is part of a *comune* in Tuscany, just sixty kilometres southeast of Siena. While the abbey was originally Benedictine, it was later transferred to the Cistercians in 1228. Mancinelli is credited with bringing the shrine to wider scholarly attention in a 1974 publication. Beyond that, how the shrine came into the church's collection is unknown.

Mancinelli describes how a small cabinet in the abbey housed the shrine, while Ryan describes how the shrine formed part of a small collection of three containers, each bound by a red cord and a wax seal of abbot Almagisius, or Almigisus [Figures 53.A-B].<sup>353</sup> The *Codex Diplomaticus Amiatinus*, a collection of documents related to Abbazia San Salvatore from 736 to 1198, provides no insight into who this abbot could be. Mancinelli doubts the abbot was from the Abbazia San Salvatore, suggesting instead a Frankish connection.<sup>354</sup> Indeed similar name-forms

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<sup>351</sup> For more on the influence of Insular monasteries and saints in medieval Europe see, Fox, *Power and Religion in Merovingian Gaul*; Margaret Stokes, *Six Months in the Apennines; Or, A Pilgrimage in Search of Vestiges of the Irish Saints in Italy* (London: George Bell and Sons, 1892); Doherty, 'Exchange and Trade in Early Medieval Ireland', 67-89; Jean-Michel Picard and Notker Balbulus, 'Adomnán's "Vita Columbae" and the Cult of Colum Cille in Continental Europe', *Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy* 98, no. 1 (1998): 1-23.

<sup>352</sup> *Notitia dedicationis ecclesiae sancti Salvatoris in monte Amiata*, ed. Percy Ernst Schramm, vol. SS 30, *Monumenta Germaniae Historica* (Hannover: Hahn, 1934), 971-2.

<sup>353</sup> Mancinelli, 'Relique e Reliquiari', 255; Ryan, 'House-Shaped Shrine of Probable Irish Origin', 141.

<sup>354</sup> Wilhelm Kurze, *Codex diplomaticus Amiatinus* (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1974).

appear in the *Capitulare missorum Attiniacense* and the *Polyptichum Irminonis abbatis*; however, no surviving details specify who the abbot was.<sup>355</sup>

Fortunately, Ferdinando Ughelli, a seventeenth-century Cistercian monk, church historian, and member of the Gregorian University in Rome recorded his trip to Amiata in *Italia sacra sive de episcopis Italiae*. He wrote,

Eodem autem anno, qui Vvinizonis Amiatini Abbatis postremus fuit, penultimus vero Arialdi Clusini Episcopi, Benedicto summo Potifice mandante magna frequentia populorum S. Salvatoris de monte Amiato templum consecrarunt, ibidemque sanctorum reliquias honorifice condiderunt 1036...Ego vero cum illie aliquandiu suissem commoratus, indagine subsequentis scripturae in sub terranae Ecclesia, quae dicitur Crypta, quarumdam ararum submovi lapides, ibique reperi reliquias capsulis lingneis inclusas, obsignatasque corcea cera, in qua spectabatur effigies Vvinizonis Abbatis, illasque cum aliis reliquis, honoriscentiori loco collocandas curavianno 1631.<sup>356</sup>

Ughelli's brief discussion of the objects he found in the church's crypt includes wooden boxes with seals of an abbot Winizonis. Is it possible that these are the same wooden boxes preserved at Amiata? Mancinelli suggests Ughelli simply recorded the wrong name of the seals, as only after conservation did the name on the seal become legible. While more research on the seals is needed to place them properly within a historical context, even despite any differences of abbot seals, Ughelli's 'reliquias capsulis lingneis' could include the Amiata shrine. If so, although Ughelli does not

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<sup>355</sup> *Capitularia regum Francorum: additae sunt Marculfi monachi et aliorum formulae veteres et notae doctissimorum virorum*, ed. Alfred Boretius and Victor Krause, vol. 2 (Hannover: Impensis bibliopolii Hahniani, 1883), 277; Benjamin Guérard, *Polyptique de l'abbé Irminon, ou Dénombrement des manses, serfs et revenus de l'abbaye de Saint-Germain-des-Prés sous le règne de Charlemagne*, vol. 2 (Paris: Imprimerie Royale, 1844), 272.

<sup>356</sup> 'In the same year, which was the last of Winizonis Abbot of Amiata, second to last of the true Bishop Arialdu Clusinian, Benedict the highest Pontiff, delivering over a large multitude of the people they consecrated San Salvatore of Mount Amiata, in that place the relics of the saints were honourably stored in 1036...but I stayed with them for some time. I succeeded in exploring underneath the Church, which is called the Crypt, I cleared off some altars and stones, which in that place I found the remains of wooden boxes, in which I saw the portrait of Abbot Winizonis, there with other relics, in that place of honour conserved in 1631', Ferdinando Ughelli, *Italia sacra sive De episcopis Italiae et insularum adjacentium*, vol. 3 (Rome: Bernardum Tanum, 1647), 623.



explicitly describe the Amiata shrine in detail, his report could be the earliest record of an Insular house-shaped shrine.

Much like the Amiata shrine, the Bobbio shrine is connected to an Italian abbey possessing Insular roots. Founded in 614, Bobbio is a small town and commune in the province of Piacenza, Emilia-Romagna in northern Italy. It is directly linked to Insular ecclesiastics through its founder, St Columbanus. Columbanus's influence stretched across Europe through the monasteries he founded and the dedications he was included in, as seen with Abbazia di San Salvatore near Monte Amiata.<sup>357</sup> Indeed, the Irish influence on Bobbio did not end with St Columbanus; three of the first six successors of St Columbanus were Irish, notably Cummain, Comgall, and Fergus.<sup>358</sup> As a site of major Lombardian donations, several translations of relics and renovations to the fabric of the church and abbey took place.<sup>359</sup> Of these, the first translations occurred in the ninth century during the abbacy of Agiluf in 883 to 896, when the relics of St Columbanus were translated into the crypt of the Basilica di San Colombano along with those of his successors. The second translation of the relics of St Columbanus began on 31 August 1482, when they were moved and placed inside a new sarcophagus carved by Giovanni dei Patriarchi in 1480, which was decorated with episodes from the saint's *vita*.<sup>360</sup>

Despite this long history of the abbey, the Bobbio shrine was only discovered in the early twentieth century, following Cardinal Louge's visit to Bobbio in 1904. After the Irish Cardinal's visit, in preparation for the thirteen-hundredth anniversary

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<sup>357</sup> Picard and Balbulus, 'Adomnán's "Vita Columbae"', 11-20.

<sup>358</sup> Richter, *Bobbio in the Early Middle Ages*, 49-71.

<sup>359</sup> Alessandro Zironi, *Il monastero longobardo di Bobbio* (Spoleto: Fondazione Centro Italiano di Studi sull'alto Medioevo, 2004), 9-19.

<sup>360</sup> Stokes, *Six Months in the Apennines*, 158-63.

of the saint's death, the Basilica's crypt was renovated. On 17 February 1910, a wooden box measuring 75 x 25 cm was discovered inside a sarcophagus within the crypt.<sup>361</sup> The panels of the Bobbio shrine were sent to Rome and returned in 1940, but mislaid; only later were they re-discovered by Monsignor Michele Tosi, the director of the Archivi Storici di Bobbio.<sup>362</sup> While the details of this discovery are limited, a list of the contents found inside the box can still be seen at the Archivi Storici di Bobbio and are reproduced here:

- A. Metal (lead) *ampullae* from the Holy Land
- B. *Agnus Dei* from the pontificate of Alexander VI (1492–1503)
- C. Fragments of the wooden box in which the following objects were found
- D. A sliding lid of a wooden sarcophagus-shaped shrine
- E. Two fragments of wood, 'possibly from a cylindrical beaker'
- F. Three wooden crosses, fragmentary
- G. Pieces of cloth, possibly *brandae*
- H. Fragments of a wooden sarcophagus-shaped shrine. Lid secured by a copper-alloy hinge/plate
- I. Wooden lid from a similar container
- J. Another wooden shrine with a sliding lid
- K. Wooden sarcophagus-shaped shrine with sliding base panel. Circled chi-rhos decorate the gables
- L. Four *ampullae* stoppers, wood
- M. Fragments of a cylindrical wooden box (pyxis?)
- N. Two fragments of a wooden dish
- O. Fragments of wood lined with red leather
- P. Fragments of small baskets
- Q. Three pieces of copper-alloy sheets (the Bobbio shrine)
- R. Fragments of thin board

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<sup>361</sup> Ryan, 'Metalwork in the Museo dell'Abbazia', 102.

<sup>362</sup> Tosi, *Bobbio*, 81-3.

S. Jewel, drop-shaped, in metal setting

T. Wooden board with a cross, which is covered in copper alloy<sup>363</sup>

Nothing in sources before the twentieth century suggests the shrine was directly associated with St Columbanus. Margaret Stokes provided a description of the monastery in 1892, but as the sarcophagus was opened eighteen years later, her reports are of limited use. Still, her letters describe a number of relics associated with St Columbanus, namely a knife said to protect bread it cuts from spoiling; a wooden cup with fourteenth-century additions in silver, added in 1354 by Padre Abbate de Pietro; a small bell; a water-vessel said to be given by Pope Gregory I to Columbanus, which itself contained unspecified relics from Rome and was reported to have been part of the miracles at the Wedding feast in Cana; a silver bust of St Columbanus, containing a portion of his skull, made in Pavia in 1514; and a cylindrical container fashioned from ivory that depicts scenes of Orpheus.<sup>364</sup> Much earlier, Dom Jean Mabillon, a French monk and scholar at the Congregation of Saint Maur, published a description of his trip to Bobbio in his *Museum italicum* in 1687. Mabillon only noted the state of the crypt and those interred there, a few reliquaries, including two containers shaped like a dove and ram, and some of the codices still within the abbey's collection.<sup>365</sup> Again, no small container similar to the Bobbio shrine is explicitly mentioned. Nor does Benedetto Rosetti discuss any tradition of such a shrine or container in his 1795 *Bobbio illustrato*; indeed, at that point, the shrine may already have been placed in the crypt and lost to the abbey's cultural

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<sup>363</sup> This list also appears in Ryan, 'Metalwork in the Museo dell'Abbazia', 103-4; G. Celi, *Cimeli Bobbiesi* (Rome: Civiltà Cattolica, 1923), 7-46; Tosi, *Bobbio*, 82-3.

<sup>364</sup> Stokes, *Six Months in the Apennines*, 177-86.

<sup>365</sup> Johanne Mabillon and Michaele Germain, *Museum italicum, seu Collectio veterum scriptorum ex bibliothecis italicis* (Rome: Edmundi Martin, Johannem Boudot, and Stephanum Martin, 1687), 215-23.

memory until its rediscovery.<sup>366</sup> Notably, no container other than perhaps the vase given by Pope Gregory I is linked to St Columbanus in his *vitae*, including both Jonas of Bobbio's account and the *Miracula sancti Columbani*, which included fourteenth-century material.<sup>367</sup>

However, this evidence can still help inform us of the shrine's function. Notably, the shrine was discovered as separate pieces along with other ancient objects that were worn, damaged, and broken, including other types of sacral containers such as *ampullae* and wooden portable shrines with sliding lids. The mixture of objects from multiple periods, in particular, the *Agnus Dei* from the pontificate of Alexander VI, suggests that they were not gathered together until the end of the fifteenth century. Indeed, their deposit in the sanctified crypt may have been a way to preserve their sacredness while removing them from continued physical use. Perhaps the shrine had simply broken and was considered too ancient to repair for economic, aesthetic, religious, or social reasons. While an absence of sources cannot be used to prove the shrine was not associated with St Columbanus in earlier periods, given the traditional history of the abbey, the antiquarian account of its inventory, and the lack of any mention of the shrine or a similar object in the life of Columbanus, if the shrine was originally associated with St Columbanus, this information was lost by the fifteenth century. Indeed, at any point up until the fifteenth century, the shrine may have been carried or purchased by any of the subsequent abbots or presented as a donation.

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<sup>366</sup> Benedetto Rossetti, *Bobbio illustrato* (Torino: Stamperia sociale, 1795).

<sup>367</sup> Alexander O'Hara and Faye Taylor, 'Aristocratic and Monastic Conflict in Tenth-Century Italy: The Case of Bobbio and the Miracula Sancti Columbani', *Viator* 44, no. 3 (2013): 43-61; *Miracula sancti Columbani*, ed. H. Bresslau, vol. 30, Monumenta Germaniae Historica (Hannover: Hahn, 1884), 993-1015; *Acta sanctorum ordinis sancti Benedicti*, ed. D'Archery Mabillon, vol. 1 (Venice: Sebastianum Coleti and Josephum Bettinelli, 1724), 2-26.

However, Insular house-shaped shrines in church treasuries cannot always be linked to Insular saints. The Moissac shrine was said to have been part of the treasury of the Moissac Abbey, a Benedictine and Cluniac monastery in Moissac, Tarn-et-Garonne in southwestern France. The shrine was originally published in Sam Fogg's sale catalogue in 2007.<sup>368</sup> In 2003, Guy Ladrière of Ratton and Ladrière, a Parisian antiquities dealer, contacted Richard Cambers, who in turn contacted the British Museum, to enquire about the shrine's Anglo-Saxon characteristics. In 2005/6, the British Museum conducted a series of physical examinations of the shrine, including surface examinations of the wood and metal. These examinations found that the side panels of the shrine had at one point been moved; the shrine was constructed with a pin-lock [Figure 25.J]; wax was present on the surface of the shrine; the ridgepole had been replaced; a cavity had been carved into the base of the shrine and covered with a pine panel [Figure 25.F]; and relics had been placed inside this cavity. Analysis of the box's main cavity showed that it too had been altered at some point [Figure 25.G], as there was evidence that the cavity's depth was increased, although for what specific purpose remains unknown.<sup>369</sup>

The details of the Moissac shrine's provenance are brief. As was reported, 'a paper note, written in French and dated 'Moissac, 16 août 1801', is said to have been inside the box when it came to light'.<sup>370</sup> The paper 'appears genuine' and details the relics that were found inside the shrine,

Je declare avoir placé moi-même dans cette espèce de chasse les reliques qui y sont contenues je les trouverai parmi les effets de ma tante alpinienne de Bessou [?] née Lespinasse qui certainement les tenait des personnes très pieuses je crois même que celles de St Pierre, St Julien, St Cyprien lui avait été données par le sacristain, L'abbé Castanier, qui les avait extraites lui

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<sup>368</sup> *Art of the Middle Ages*, 16.

<sup>369</sup> Webster, 'Anglo-Carolingian Christatory', 66.

<sup>370</sup> *Ibid.*, 73.

meme des reliquaries du chapitre. A Moissac ce 16 aout 1801, Lespinasse fils aîné.<sup>371</sup>

Notably, the letter does not state that the shrine was found or resided at Moissac prior to 1801, nor does it explicitly detail the *chasse*'s appearance, meaning the letter may have accompanied only the relics, which may have come from another shrine altogether before they were finally moved into the Moissac shrine at some unknown point. Camber has highlighted an inventory notice from the Moissac treasury dated 1699 that lists an 'autre reliquaire en pyramide, de cuivre doré'.<sup>372</sup> While this entry could refer to the Moissac shrine, it could also refer to other shrines similar to the eighth-century pyramidal shrine held by the Schatzkammer der St Catharinenkirch Maaseik, Belgium [Figures 54.A-B].<sup>373</sup>

While Moissac Abbey was founded in the seventh century by St Didier, bishop of Cahors, and later affiliated with the Cluny Abbey in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, there is no direct early connection between the site and specific Insular saints, missionaries, or elites.<sup>374</sup> Even so, the extensive repairs and alterations to the Moissac shrine suggest that while the shrine was later used as a reliquary, the

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<sup>371</sup> 'I declare that I have myself placed in this kind of *chasse* the relics which are contained in it. I found them among the effects of my aunt Alpinienne de Bessou[?], neé Lespinasse, who certainly had them from very pious persons I believe, even though those of St Peter, St Julien and St Cyprien had been given to her by the sacristan, Abbé Castanier, who had extracted them himself from the reliquaries in the chapter house. At Moissac, 16 August 1801, Lespinasse the elder son', translation in *ibid.*

<sup>372</sup> A. Lagrèze-Fossat, 'Inventaire du Trésor de l'Abbaye de Moissac en 1669, extrait d'un procès-verbal de l'état de l'église de l'abbaye de Moissac en 1669', *Études historiques de Moissac* 1 (1870): 258; 'Inventaire du Trésor de l'Abbaye de Moissac en 1669, extrait d'un procès-verbal de l'état de l'église de l'abbaye de Moissac en 1669', *Revue des Sociétés Savantes* 6 (1875): 232–6.

<sup>373</sup> *Kunst und Kultur der Karolingerzeit*, ed. Christoph Stiegemann and Matthias Wemhoff (Mainz: Philipp von Zabern, 1999), 529.

<sup>374</sup> Paul Mironneau, 'Idéologie, histoire et reconstruction monastique: l'abbaye de Moissac à la fin du XIV<sup>e</sup> siècle', *Revue Mabillon* 5 (1994): 107–16; R. de la Haye, 'La légende de la source miraculeuse de l'abbaye de Moissac ou: comment lire correctement Aymeric de Peyrac', *Bulletin de la Société archéologique de Tarn-et-Garonne* 120 (1995): 37–47.

relics needed to be added into the modified base of the shrine for some reason, perhaps due to how relics were added to Continental purse-shaped shrines.<sup>375</sup>

While Moissac does not boast the deep connections to Insular saints that Bobbio, Abbadia di San Salvatore, and Bologna do, the Mortain shrine may not have been tied to specific saint cults at all but may have been part of an elite donation. The known history of the Mortain shrine begins with Henri Moulin's 1864 discovery of the shrine in the treasury of the Collégiale Saint-Évroult de Mortain, a church college and royal chapel in the commune of Mortain, situated in La Marche, a province of Normandy. Moulin provided the first documentary evidence,

la sacristie de l'église de Mortain possède un coffret, de 0 m. 135 de longueur sur 0 m. 050 de largeur et 0 m. 12 de hauteur, lequel a dû faire originairement partie du trésor de l'ancienne collégiale de Saint-Evroult. Sa boîte, en bois de hêtre, grossièrement évidée, est revêtu à l'extérieur d'appliques de cuivre, légèrement doré, et fermée par un couvercle formant toiture. Ce petit, meuble, destiné à être suspendu au cou, a dû, au moins le principe, servir de chrismatorium, bien qu'il ait été converti après coup en reliquaire.<sup>376</sup>

Moulin suggests a tenth- or eleventh-century date for the shrine, as the Collégiale Saint-Évroult de Mortain was originally founded in 1082 by Robert, Count of Mortain, half-brother to William the Conqueror. Unfortunately, no early documents surviving in the regional archives mention the shrine, although a letter dated 10 December 1923 from M. Gastebois, the principal of the College of Argenan, to the scholar Maurice Cahen states, 'L'abbé Lemazioer, curé archiprêtre de Mortain...me

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<sup>375</sup> This is discussed in further detail in the following chapter.

<sup>376</sup> 'The sacristy of the church of Mortain has a box, 13.5 cm in length, 5 cm wide, and 12 cm high, which was originally part of the ancient treasury of Collégiale de Saint-Evroult. Its box, from beech wood, roughly hollowed, is covered on the outside with copper, lightly gilt, and closed by a roof lid. This small furnishing, intended to be hung from the neck, was at the least served as the principle *chrismatorium*, although it was converted to a reliquary afterwards', Henri Moulin, *Dissertation historique et archéologique sur l'église collégiale de Mortain* (Mortain: A. Lebel, 1865), 75-7.

dis que d'après la tradition et les notes écrites de ses prédécesseurs, il devait remonter au VIII<sup>e</sup> siècle, époque de Charlemagne très probablement'.<sup>377</sup>

By 1864, the shrine was being used as a reliquary, while sometime between then and 1899, when the shrine was photographed, a hole was cut into the lid of the shrine, destroying much of the iconography. The epigraphy found on the back of the Mortain shrine suggests that it originated in Mercia before its nineteenth-century discovery in the church's treasury.<sup>378</sup> Was the shrine a gift for the Mercian court, or did it arrive at the abbey through a later donation? While the precise details of the shrine's history are elusive, the shrine's modern use as a reliquary and subsequent damage to the lid suggest that the shrine's ornamentation was secondary to its ancient character. Still, as one of the few shrines with an explicit inscription linking it to specific functional terms, the Mortain shrine's function as an academic touchstone makes it one of the most important Insular house-shaped shrines for the purposes of discussing appropriate terminology and associated functions.<sup>379</sup>

In light of the above evidence, those shrines connected to church treasuries show us that some Insular house-shaped shrines, at various points in their use-lives, were used as reliquaries and even modified, as is the case with the Moissac shrine. However, it does not appear that these shrines were actively being venerated after the seventeenth century, given the burial of the Bobbio shrine, the transference of the Ranvaik shrine into a royal collection, and the possible reference to the Amiata shrine being found in a crypt. Finally, while there is a correlation between the

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<sup>377</sup> 'Father Lemazioer, archpriest of Mortain... tells me that according to the tradition and the written notes of his predecessors, it was from the eighth century, very likely from the time of Charlemagne', Cahen, *L'inscription runique*, 9.

<sup>378</sup> *The Making of England*, 176.

<sup>379</sup> See the introduction to this thesis and chapter one for further discussion of this topic.



veneration of St Columbanus and the presence of Insular house-shaped shrines in Italy, those in France, Norway, and Belgium do not necessarily appear to be linked to specific Insular monasteries or saint cults, although the histories of these shrines are not fully known.

## Conclusion

From the above discussion on the provenances of Insular house-shaped shrines, notable similarities between the shrines begin to emerge. First, as seen with the renovation and epigraphy on the Clonard shrine, at least one Insular house-shaped shrine was being repaired up to and perhaps beyond the twelfth century, suggesting a long use-life before it was lost or abandoned. Of those shrines found in loughs, rivers, or fields, it has been suggested that they were at least functional up until the tenth or twelfth century and were then lost or abandoned due perhaps to violent incursions or accidents during journeys. While public works along waterways in Ireland account for the disproportionate number of finds in rivers and loughs, there is evidence of early medieval churches near these find-spots. These churches feature strong local saint cults, providing further points of origin for some Insular house-shaped shrines. Next, not only do the contents found with Insular house-shaped shrines suggest gendered engagements with the shrines in Viking contexts, but also that their deposits within church treasuries illustrate how early medieval shrines were perceived in later periods. Within the context of shrines found in Italy, the deposit of the Bobbio shrine is most telling, in that even though the shrine was removed from use, it appears to have still been considered sacred or important enough to deposit with other relics and containers.

A wide examination of the shrines within these sections highlights how the primary period of interest in Insular house-shaped shrines coincide with the Celtic Revival of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. While shrines such as the Ranvaik shrine were already known when a shrine was discovered in Monymusk house, more local interests and theories of potential connections to either SS Columba or Columbanus dominated the scholarly conversation and popular imagination. Indeed, the evidence for shrines connected to St Columbanus is perhaps stronger with those found in Italy than those found in Ireland and Scotland. Indeed, it is important to note the network of Irish saints connected to St Finnian of Clonard, which included SS Columba, Columbanus, Molaise of Devenish, Maedóg, and Sinell, further linked the areas of Clonard and Lough Erne. In considering the provenances of Insular house-shaped shrines, we can begin to more fully understand how and why the shrines were either imbued with national legends or reported with a more prosaic view of their provenances.



## Chapter 3

### **Disassembling the Container: Understanding the Haptic and Visual Elements of House-shape Shrine Construction and Accessibility**

While the number of known Insular house-shaped shrines has grown in the last thirty years, no examination of this group has taken place since 1984. This chapter begins to fill that *lacuna* by examining the major constructional aspects of Insular house-shaped shrines. Through a comparison with contemporary shrines, both Insular and Continental, we can see that the wooden cores of Insular house-shaped shrines, a common feature within the group, could not function as boxes separately from their hinges. This examination also shows that securing the precious contents of Insular house-shaped shrines was a key concern, one intrinsically connected to typologies of shrine construction. Thus, Insular house-shaped shrines were constructed as purpose-built containers and do not represent a form of enshrinement similar to Insular bell-, belt-, or book-shrines. Indeed, Insular house-shaped shrines represent a connection with and response to Continental traditions of carrying, preserving, and displaying sacral matter, while simultaneously remaining linked to local Insular landscapes and visual traditions.

Insular house-shaped shrines are categorised into one grouping through shared characteristics. Quast is the most recent to analyse the various categories of Insular and Continental portable reliquaries (*reiserreliquiare*) and chrismals, although Conway was the first to truly engage with Insular house-shaped shrines as a category

of portable shrines.<sup>380</sup> As touched upon in the introduction to this thesis, I define Insular house-shaped shrines as small rectangular boxes with trapezoidal hinged lids, which as containers range in overall size from the Clonmore shrine, at 8.0 x 8.2 x 2.7 cm, to the larger Lough Erne (A) shrine, which measures 16.0 x 17.0 x 7.8 cm. These hinged, hip-roof lids are further secured to the boxes by locking mechanisms on the face of the shrines. Within this group, there are constructional, ornamental, and material variations, including hinged or ringed suspension fittings, ridgepoles, hollowed-out wooden cores, decorative lugs, and glass and gem settings.

While terms such as *construction* and *structure* share similar connotations, I have chosen to emphasise the term *construction* to highlight the physicality of the shrines, their composite nature, and their possible connections with Insular architecture, which chapter five examines in more depth. Furthermore, by *portable* shrine, I mean that these containers are not only of a size, weight, and shape that would facilitate their transportation across distances, short or long, but that the material evidence suggests they were designed for movement. For Insular house-shaped shrines, this portability is substantiated by the presence of hinged, hip-roof lids that can be locked by an internal hinge located towards the front of the shrine. Additionally, suspension-fittings, either copper-alloy rings or more complex cast hinges, are found on the sides of the shrines. While the chains or thongs connected to these fittings typically do not survive, the presence of suspension fittings and the wear patterns suggest the shrines were intended to be carried, worn, or hung in a manner similar to the *capsa* and *chrismal* of Insular and Continental literature discussed in chapter one. Suspension fittings and securable hinged lids suggest that

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<sup>380</sup> Quast, *Reliquienkästchen aus Ennabeuren*, 58-60; Conway, 'Portable Reliquaries', 218-40.

the creators of Insular house-shaped shrines understood that their contents needed to be portable, secure, *and* accessible.

Furthermore, when speaking of the *accessibility* of a shrine I refer to how easily they might be opened or closed so that their contents might be used or altered, rather than whether specific audiences could access the shrines or their contents. Finally, I use the term *box* to denote a rectangular or square container with a flat base that has been fitted with a lid. Indeed, the ‘boxness’ of portable shrines is not trivial, as Jás Elsner writes, ‘each box is itself a three-dimensional frame, a container for something, which is kept inside the box’.<sup>381</sup> While Insular house-shaped shrines may be simply categorised as boxes, they are complex artefacts whose features, constructional or otherwise, alert the viewer to the significance of their contents.

## **Foundations of Wood and Metal: Typologies of Construction**

Two principle means of constructing Insular house-shaped shrines can be discerned: those which utilise a wooden core and those constructed entirely from metalwork held in place through soldering or metallic frames. Within the second category, three general subcategories of shrine-construction can be delineated: the panels of the shrine are 1) held in place primarily through soldering, 2) by soldering and a metal frame, or 3) by attaching panels directly to a metal core. As illustrated here [Figure 55], the largest percentage of Insular house-shaped shrines, 72% of the total group, were constructed with wooden cores. The following will clarify and detail these forms of construction.

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<sup>381</sup> Jás Elsner, 'Framing the Objects We Study: Three Boxes from Late Roman Italy', *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 71 (2008): 21.

Wooden cores or the evidence for such appear with thirteen of the eighteen Insular house-shaped shrines. While the wood of the Amiata and Emly shrines are the most visible due to the openwork panels used in their ornamentation [Figures 20.A, 9.A], no shrines within the group are constructed only of wood. However, two wooden objects from the Fishamble Street excavations in Dublin, Ireland, suggest that wooden house-shaped shrines may have existed. The first artefact is a bar carved with outward-facing birds and ornate interlace [Figure 56]. The fragment was discovered in an eleventh-century archaeological context, and scholars have commented on its general appearance and resemblance to ridgepoles.<sup>382</sup> Its overall similarity to other purse clasps, seen specifically in how the wood of the Fishamble Street ridgepole has been shaped to curve inward at the bottom, suggests that it is not a house-shaped shrine fragment [Figure 57]; however, a carved lid from the same excavation area may be such a fragment.<sup>383</sup> This wooden lid was also found within an eleventh-century context. It is damaged, and its corresponding box does not appear to have survived. In contrast to the previous artefact, the Fishamble lid's ornament is substantially less ornate. The four sides of the lid are smooth and show no indication of having been covered in metal panels, i.e., there are no perforations from nails or rivets. However, the ridge of the lid is carved with inward-facing beasts and a serrated edge, although only one beast head survives [Figure 58.A]. The zoomorphic terminal's stylised mouth or beak is open, while the back of the head has been carved

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<sup>382</sup> James T. Lang, 'Eleventh-Century Style in Decorated Wood from Dublin', in *Ireland and Insular Art A.D. 500-1200*, ed. Michael Ryan (Dublin: Royal Irish Academy, 1987), 177-8; James Graham-Campbell, *Viking Artefacts: A Select Catalogue* (London: British Museum, 1980), 131-2; Patrick F Wallace, 'A Reappraisal of the Archaeological Significance of Wood Quay', in *Viking Dublin Exposed: The Wood Quay Saga*, ed. John Bradley (Dublin: O'Brien Press, 1984), 154-5.

<sup>383</sup> Cynthia Hahn, *Strange Beauty: Issues in the Making and Meaning of Reliquaries, 400-circa 1204* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2012), 104-9.

out, creating a sharp peak [Figure 58.B]. Notably, inward-facing beast-head terminals are found on every Insular house-shaped shrine with a zoomorphic ridgepole.

The interior of the Fishamble lid is smoother and shallower than those of Insular house-shaped shrines [Figure 58.C], suggesting that the lid, while using some similar stylistic elements, still differs from this group. The Fishamble lid has not previously been integrated into a discussion on Insular house-shaped shrines, yet it offers a strong indication that the typology was well known and present until at least the eleventh century. An alternative interpretation of the lid's function could be that it was a trial piece or used for carrying a small collection of sacral materials, as the depth of the lid's interior would have limited what the box could carry.<sup>384</sup> Indeed, without more of the lid or its box, it is hard to arrive at a definitive understanding of its construction and function in relation to Insular house-shaped shrines. In contrast to the Fishamble lid, which does not appear to have used other materials in its construction, the wooden cores of Insular house-shaped shrine serve primarily as base structures to which other ornamental and structural pieces were attached.

To briefly review: the Amiata, Emly, Lough Erne (A), Melhus, Moissac, Monymusk, Mortain, Ranvaik, and Setnes shrines have extant wooden cores. The Amiata and Emly shrines are highly similar in construction: both shrines consist of a wooden core onto which tinned-lead openwork panels have been nailed, but only onto the face of the shrines [Figures 20.A, 9.A]. In contrast, the exteriors of the Lough Erne (A), Melhus, and Setnes shrines are fitted with tinned copper-alloy

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<sup>384</sup> Lower portions of wooden chismatories, with interiors that were subdivided into three sections, have also been found in later archaeological contexts in Norwegian churches and elsewhere, see Bernt C. Lange, 'Salvebeholder', *Telemark Historie* 7 (1986): 53-5.



panels held in place by gilt copper-alloy frames [Figures 5.A, 16.A, 17.A], although the wood on the back of the Melhus shrine is exposed [Figure 16.B]. Alternatively, the Moissac shrine features gilt repoussé copper-alloy panels set in silver mouldings [Figure 25.A], while the gilt repoussé panels of the Mortain shrine are not set into any mouldings [Figure 26.A]. The Monymusk shrine differs primarily in terms of materials: silver panels are affixed to the face of the shrine and held in place with gilt copper-alloy mouldings, while the remaining sides of the shrine are fitted with plain copper-alloy panels [Figures 14.A-D]. The Ranvaik shrine is slightly more complicated: the sides and back of the shrine feature tinned copper-alloy panels, while tinned copper-alloy panels are set behind openwork copper-alloy panels on the face of the shrine [Figures 19.A-D].

Throughout my fieldwork, I observed that in each of these aforementioned cases the wooden cores were constructed in essentially the same manner: using the Setnes shrine as an example, the lids and containers are each carved from a single, hollowed-out block of wood, which creates a cavity where the contents of the shrine could be securely stored [Figures 17.F-G]; furthermore, the lip of both lid and box are smooth, showing no signs that the lids were designed to securely fit their respective boxes without the use of hinges. That the wooden cores of each shrine were constructed in a similar manner despite differences in the time and location of their manufacture suggests a wide-spread or shared understanding of their possible forms and functions. I refer to these wooden boxes as cores or bases, as this appears to be the main constructional reason for their use.

Unfortunately, the Brussels, Clonard, London, and Hokksund shrines are fragments, collectively consisting of only six panels and two suspension straps. The

Brussels shrine consists of only one panel of copper alloy [Figure 28]. The Clonard shrine is highly fragmented and consists of two tinned panels of copper alloy and a decorative copper-alloy lug and hinge, which holds a piece of blue glass [Figures 3.A-B]. The London shrine consists of only two silver panels decorated with niello [Figure 27], while the remains of the Hokksund shrine consist of a copper-alloy panel decorated with *millefiori* and a copper-alloy hinge [Figures 18.A-B]. While fragmented, some observations of each of these shrines are still possible.

As Ryan observes with the Brussels shrine, Insular house-shaped shrines ‘fall into two general categories viz. those which are made of wood decorated with inlays and applied mounts...or the more common variety where the wood is entirely sheeted’.<sup>385</sup> While Ryan is correct in that Insular house-shaped shrines can be subdivided based on their construction, he is incorrect in his initial categories. Ryan’s observation predates the wider publication of the Bobbio shrine and the discovery of the Clonmore shrine—both constructed entirely from metal panels. Ryan does refer to the Bologna shrine but fails to note that the shrine is completely constructed from metal, rendering his categories erroneous. Additionally, Ryan, citing Mahr’s and Raftery’s catalogues, writes that the Shannon shrine was constructed from wood encased by metal panels, which is incorrect, as the Shannon shrine is constructed entirely from metalwork.<sup>386</sup>

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<sup>385</sup> Ryan, ‘An Insular Gilt-Bronze Object’, 58.

<sup>386</sup> Stevenson makes note of this in the 1940s, Robert B. K. Stevenson, ‘The Shannon Shrine’, *The Journal of the Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland* 77 (1947): 156-7; Mahr and Raftery, *Christian Art*, 110.

With this in mind, it is important to carefully read Ryan's notes on the Brussels shrine, as it is the only record of the shrine that I have been able to locate.<sup>387</sup> Ryan states, 'to judge by the ragged tags of metal projecting beyond the neatly-flanged area, it was made to be retained in a frame by the pressure of mouldings or binding strips'.<sup>388</sup> Ryan makes no further note of any pins, nails, or holes along the edges of the fragment. Complicating matters, any fine detail in the only photograph is difficult to read. However, upon close inspection of the photograph, the edges of the Brussels shrine appear slightly bent in a manner that would go beyond mere clipping [Figure 28]. For example, while the Monymusk shrine was fitted with slightly ill-fitting, loose semi-tubular frames [Figure 14.D], as can be seen from the right side of the shrine, the panels of the Ranvaik shrine are subjected to more pressure along their edges due to their firmly secured frames [Figure 19.D]; the pressure of holding down the Ranvaik panels would produce a similar bending of the panel's edges as that seen with the Brussels fragment, while the panels of the looser framework of the Monymusk shrine do not show any bending. Moreover, the metal panels of the Shannon shrine, constructed entirely from metal, do not exhibit the same level of strain as seen on the edges of the Brussels fragment. Therefore, the edges of the Brussels fragment suggest that the shrine was originally constructed with a wooden core in a manner similar to the Ranvaik shrine.

Fortunately, the Clonard and London panels are more straightforward. While also fragments, multiple perforations can be seen along the edges of the Clonard shrine panels, suggesting not only a wooden core but multiple periods of repair

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<sup>387</sup> I have placed several enquiries with the Musées royaux d'Art et d'Histoire, Brussels, however, Alexandra de Poorter states: 'I'm afraid we don't have it in our collections'. The current location of the panel is thus unknown. De Poorter.

<sup>388</sup> Ryan, 'An Insular Gilt-Bronze Object', 58.

[Figure 3.C]. Similarly, small perforations follow the border of the London shrine panels, along with four larger holes that appear on the corners of both the lid and the container panels [Figure 27], each strongly suggesting a wooden base, as similar patterns are found on the Setnes shrine. Lastly, while the Hokksund shrine consists now of only two fragments, four large holes can be seen on the edge of the panel [Figure 18.A], suggesting that it too may have been attached to a wooden core.

Returning to my categorisation schema, after the larger category of shrines constructed with wooden cores, the second category of shrines encompasses those constructed without wooden cores, which can be seen with the Bobbio, Bologna, Clonmore, Lough Erne (B), and Shannon shrines. Within this broad category, three primary means of constructing the box of these shrines can be observed, depending on whether the panels are held in place: 1) primarily through soldering, 2) by soldering and a metal frame, or 3) by attaching panels directly to a metal core.

To briefly summarise, with the Bobbio, Clonmore, and Lough Erne (B) shrines, soldering was likely the primary means of attaching the separate panels. The thinness of the panels and the lack of any nails or perforations along their edges suggests that they were not attached to a metal frame [Figures 22.B, 10.B, 6.C]. The main difference among these three shrines is that the Lough Erne (B) shrine's side panels are flat [Figure 16.C], while the side and gable panels of the Bobbio and Clonmore shrines [Figures 22, 10.C-D] are more concave. Similar concave sides can be found on the Bologna, Brussels, Ranvaik, and Setnes shrines [Figures 23.A, 28, 19.A, 17.A]; thus, six of eighteen shrines—33.3% of the total group—were constructed with concave sides. While there are some perforations on the top of the Lough Erne (B) lid panel [Figures 6.A-B], their spacing suggests that the shrine was

once fitted with a ridgepole. In the case of the Bobbio, Clonmore, and Lough Erne (B) shrines, the shrines are made from panels of tinned copper alloy, with the addition of rock crystal held in place by a lead-sealed capsule on the Bobbio shrine and blue glass settings on the Clonmore shrine [Figures 22, 10.A].<sup>389</sup>

Next, the Bologna shrine, despite their panels being made of gilt castings of copper alloy, is constructed in roughly the same fashion as the Bobbio, Clonmore, and Lough Erne (B) shrines. The Bologna shrine was assembled by setting decorated panels into gilt copper-alloy mouldings, which were then reinforced by rivets [Figures 23.A, B, D, E]. Soldering was also employed on the Bologna shrine, primarily as a means of attaching the ridgepole. In addition, the Bologna shrine is decorated with glass settings and enamelling and utilises both gilding and tinning on its panels.

Lastly, the Shannon shrine is slightly more idiosyncratic in its design. The lid of the Shannon shrine was constructed from a single piece of folded copper alloy onto which two copper-alloy gable panels were riveted [Figure 4.H]. The container of the Shannon shrine was constructed similarly: a single sheet of copper alloy was folded into three sections, creating the main body of the box, while two side panels were attached to the metal core with rivets and reinforced with gilt copper-alloy mouldings [Figure 4.D-G]. Two panels of silver were also attached to the front of the lid and container [Figure 4.A]; in this respect, the craftsmen of the Shannon shrine treated the copper-alloy roof and container essentially like a wooden core. The construction of the Shannon shrine suggests that the artisans who created it were familiar with the basic construction of wooden-core Insular shrines, though they may

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<sup>389</sup> Bourke, 'Irish Reliquary in Bobbio', 289.

have chosen to construct the shrine this way due to skill, resources, or taste. Still, this process resulted in a shrine constructed entirely from metal but mirroring the construction of wooden-core shrines, suggesting that the two categories are not separate but rather interconnected.

### **Between Embellishment and Necessity: Further Elements of Insular House-shaped Shrine Construction**

While the above categories describe how the boxes of Insular house-shaped shrines were assembled, it is important to note that as composite artefacts, these shrines were fitted with additional elements, some structural, some ornamental, over their use-lives, with many serving both functions. Of these elements, four main categories can be delineated: ridgepoles, suspension straps, locking pins, and applied mounts or lugs, which may include decorative elements such as enamelling, glass studs, and the like.

#### **Ridgepoles**

Ridgepoles are horizontal beams of copper alloy set onto the apex of the shrines. Typically, ridgepoles are used to secure metal panels to the lids of shrines while also hiding where panels meet or where they connect to the wooden core. Ridgepoles can also be used more ornamentally, as seen with the Amiata and Emly shrines. In the case of these two shrines, the ridgepoles do not secure any metalwork to the wooden cores. Indeed, the application of their ridgepoles demonstrates that the use of ridgepoles on Insular house-shaped shrines may be aesthetically and

symbolically driven; this is discussed further in chapter five, in relation to ridgepoles as allusions to Insular architecture. Despite the use of openwork panels on the faces of the Amiata and Emly shrines, both feature gilt tubular frames, decorative lugs, and cast ridgepoles, thereby mimicking the decoration of shrines that are more fully encased in metal [Figures 20.A, 9.A]. In contrast to this more ornamental role, the ridgepoles of the Bologna, Lough Erne (A), Moissac, Monymusk, and Ranvaik shrines not only provide further embellishment but also, along with the metal mouldings, serve to hold the roof panels in place and hide joints. While nearly all the ridgepoles above are solid-cast as single pieces, the Bologna ridgepole consists of three cast parts that were soldered together: two beast-head terminals and one roof beam form its ridgepole [Figures 23.C]. While this may at first seem anomalous, the Melhus shrine's ridgepole is also formed in three parts: two cast beast-head terminals were joined with a rolled tube of copper alloy [Figure 16.B]. Indeed, a terminal from the Blackwater collection is also similar to Melhus's ridgepole, as two small prongs jut out from the side and bottom of the terminal [Figure 16.I], which would have aided in securing the loose piece to a wooden core. In comparison, a ridgepole from the Blackwater assemblage is more 'traditional' in that it is solid cast [Figure 13.A], which is also seen with the ridgepoles from the National Museum of Ireland [Figures 7.A, 8] and Scotland [Figure 15].

In addition, as ridgepoles were attached to the roofs by nails and rivets, one can find evidence for lost ridgepoles by looking at the apex of the lid; this can be seen with the Lough Erne (B) [Figure 6.B], London [Figure 27], Setnes [Figure 17.G], and Shannon shrines [Figure 4.H]. Somewhat on the periphery of this group, the Mortain shrine is fitted with two butterfly terminals and a cross set into the apex

of the lid, possible tenth-century additions [Figure 26.A, C-D]; the cylindrical ridgepole of the Moissac shrine was also possibly added in the tenth century [Figure 25.A].<sup>390</sup> While not a ridgepole *per se*, the Mortain shrine terminals may have served as an allusion to the use of ridgepoles both within the group of Insular house-shaped shrines and beyond. Unfortunately, the Brussels, Clonard, and Hokksund shrines do not consist of enough fragments to deduce if they were fitted with ridgepoles or not. Only the Bobbio and Clonmore shrines were constructed without ridgepoles [Figures 22.A, 10.A]—that is 86.7% of the total group of shrines show sufficient evidence for ridgepole. As this graph shows, the presence of zoomorphic ridgepoles is a prevalent feature of Insular house-shaped shrine construction and ornament [Figure 59]. Where ridgepoles are still extant, this graph further shows that zoomorphic terminals represent nearly half of the total group—including shrines with lost ridgepoles—which is discussed further in chapter four.

### **Suspension Fittings**

Suspension fittings serve as an important indication of functionality for Insular house-shaped shrines; moreover, wear patterns can elucidate how the shrines may have been worn or suspended. Most common in this group are hinged suspension straps, which consist of cast copper-alloy hinges attached to the sides of a shrine. Connected to these hinges are the upper hinged straps, to which cords, thongs, or chains may have been attached. While it is presently unknown precisely whether these shrines only would have hung on or off the body, their construction strongly

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<sup>390</sup> *The Making of England*, 175-6.



indicates that they were suspended for some amount of time. To summarise: suspension hinges, complete or fragmented, are found on the Amiata [Figure 20.A], Bobbio [Figure 22.B], Bologna [Figure 23.D-E], Clonard [Figure 3.B], Clonmore [Figure 10.F], Hokksund [Figure 18.B], Lough Erne (A, B) [Figures 5.C-D, 6.C-D], Melhus [Figure 16.C], Monymusk [Figure 14.C], and Ranvaik shrines [Figure 19.C-D]. Only the empty holes from lost suspension hinges remain on the Emly, Setnes, and Shannon shrines [Figures 9.C, 17.C-D, 4.E]. The Mortain shrine features rings of copper alloy as suspension fittings [26.C-D], while the Brussels and London shrines are too fragmented to account for either possibility. Thus, the Moissac shrine is the only artefact within this group that does not have any evidence for suspension fittings, [Figures 25.D-E]. Discounting the Brussels and London shrines, 94.4% of the shrines were fitted with suspension hinges, while the Mortain shrine was the only shrine constructed with rings for its suspension fittings. As this graph shows, hinged suspension fittings are a common feature within the group [Figure 60].

Furthermore, wear patterns present on some Insular house-shaped shrines can be used to understand how the shrines were worn or suspended. On every complete shrine in the group, the right side of the shrine shows signs of greater wear, particularly on the front lower corner of the box. In addition, the bases of the shrines show wear from either being handled, presented, or set on flat surfaces. Notably, the wear patterns on the London shrine are concentrated around the left and right sides of the bottom panel [Figure 27], suggesting that the shrine was likely grasped from the side, perhaps held between the fingers which were on the front of the shrine while the thumbs stabilised the back. In addition, the backs of the Bobbio [Figure 22.C], Monymusk [Figure 14.B], Mortain [Figure 26.B], Ranvaik [Figure 19.B], and Setnes

shrines [Figure 17.B] show signs of significant wear on either the back panels, decorative lugs, or the lid hinges, indicating that the shrines were likely worn against the body; this is particularly true with the Mortain shrine, which shows horizontal wear on the back box panel [Figure 26.B], likely from swaying or rubbing against cloth. Finally, there is also wear on the National Museum of Scotland ridgepole, concentrated around the terminals [Figure 15], while the ridgepole beams of the Lough Erne (A) and Monymusk shrines also show wear [Figures 5.H, 14.D]; in all three cases this wear pattern indicates that the ridgepoles were caressed, perhaps as a form of pious touching in order to offer thanks or prayer through the shrine and its contents.

From this data, patterns of interaction can be deduced: while the backs of the Bobbio, Monymusk, and Mortain shrines show the greatest signs of wear, which could indicate the shrines were worn on the chest, similar wear patterns on the back on the Ranvaik ridgepole suggest some shrines may have been worn on the side, perhaps draped through a belt. Wearing the shrines on the side of the body would put the metalwork in contact with cloth surfaces that would wear more evenly on the back of the ridgepole, roof, and box, as is seen with the Ranvaik shrine [Figures 19.B, 47.A-B]. Even so, if Insular house-shaped shrines were only worn on the front of the body, their wear patterns indicate that the shrines would have been worn slightly under the chest towards the solar plexus, as this would match the wear patterns seen on the shrines, while also accounting for the lack of decoration on the bases of the shrines. In this sense, the faces of the shrines, typically the most ornamented aspect of the container, would rest somewhere between the heart and stomach of its keeper; the significance of this is examined in the following chapter.

Unfortunately, there is no surviving wear pattern in the current data to indicate whether or not the shrines were suspended or hung from objects nor when these wear patterns originated.

### **Locking Mechanisms**

Locking pins are a more complicated matter because while evidence for them is common, only a few survive. Essentially, locking pins are metallic pins that would have been inserted into a small hole found on either the left or right side of the shrine. After being inserted through this hole, these pins would travel down a carved channel—in the case of shrines with wooden cores—before finally passing through a simple internal hinge. This allowed the lid of the shrine to be locked in place without obscuring any decoration on the face of the shrine. The holes for locking pins appear in the upper corners of the side panels, located near the front of the shrines on the Amiata, Bobbio, Bologna [Figure 23.D], Clonmore [Figure 10.C], Emly, Lough Erne (A, B) [Figures 5.C, 6.C], Melhus [Figure 16.C], Moissac [Figure 25.D], Mortain [Figure 26.C], Monymusk [Figure 14.C], Ranvaik [Figure 19.D], and Setnes shrines [Figure 17.C]; while its side panels are damaged, the internal hinge can still be seen on the Shannon shrine [Figure 4.G]. Unfortunately, the Brussels, Clonard, Hokksund, and London shrines are too fragmented to tell if they were constructed with an internal locking mechanism.

The internal locking mechanism is a secure means of locking the lid in place. Discounting the shrines that are too fragmented, all of the shrines with a locking mechanism have internal hinges. Additionally, it should be noted that the locking pins of the Clonmore, Melhus, and Setnes shrines survive, and in each of these cases,

part of the pin is visible and accessible when inserted into the shrine. Indeed, these pins were often constructed to be gripped easily: the pin for the Clonmore shrine features a ring at its end [Figure 10.F], the Melhus locking pin is constructed with a small hinge at one end [Figure 16.H], and the Setnes shrine's locking pin, seen in the lower left corner, features a simple curved end [Figure 17.F].

From the evidence above, Insular house-shaped shrines appear highly portable. Accessibility via moving the lid and an internal locking mechanism is thus the unifying characteristic of this group, as Insular house-shaped shrines could be opened and closed, and often their lids secured, as needed.

### **Decorative Lugs and Glass Settings**

As there are elements of function that are best elucidated by focusing on construction, I leave further discussion of ornament and material for the following chapter. However, a brief restatement from the introduction of this thesis can help to illustrate wide patterns of construction; the more decorative constructional elements of Insular house-shaped shrines consist of the lugs and coloured glass, gems, or enamel. Lugs are either cast, as seen with the circular mounts of the Amiata shrine [Figure 20.A], or they are composite pieces, as seen with the Monymusk shrine's circular mounts [Figure 14.D], which consist of a circular piece of gilt chip-carved copper alloy set behind a copper-alloy ring. In regard to the Monymusk shrine, the composite circular mounts are contrasted by the solid cast rectangular mounts that also appear on the shrine [Figure 14.A]. Were these circular mounts recycled elements from another, possibly earlier shrine? While this question cannot be definitively answered at present, the Monymusk shrine's composite nature highlights

the possibility that the shrine is an assemblage of shrine fragments and perhaps that it underwent ancient repair.

Returning to the other shrines, gem or glass settings—including evidence for such—can be seen with the Amiata [Figure 20.A], Bobbio [Figure 22.A], Bologna [Figures 23.A, D, E], Brussels [Figure 28], Clonard [Figure 3.B], Emly [Figure 9.A], Lough Erne (A) [Figure 5.A], Moissac [Figure 25.I], Monymusk [Figure 14.A], and Shannon shrines [Figure 4.A]. In contrast, only five examples—the Hokksund, Lough Erne (B), Melhus, Mortain, and Setnes shrines—are not fitted with these decorative elements; instead, the Hokksund and Melhus shrines are decorated with *millefiori* [Figures 18.A-B, 16.C], while the Mortain shrine is only decorated in regard to its embossed panels and the Setnes shrine features lozenge-shaped mounts decorated with red enamel [Figures 26.A, 17.B]. Moreover, the Lough Erne (B) shrine is completely devoid of ornamentation [Figures 6.A-E]. Lastly, while it is possible that the larger perforations on the London shrine could have once held glass or gem studs [Figure 27], there is no direct evidence of glass paste or other adhesives to definitively place the London shrine into one of the above categories.

## **Containers or Contents? The Function of Insular House-shaped Shrine Wooden Cores**

Using the above description of major constructional aspects of Insular house-shaped shrines, we can now more fully address issues of enshrinement and accessibility. Notably, Alice Blackwell discusses the subject of re-use, enshrinement, and the functions of Insular house-shaped shrines in her examination of the Monymusk ‘reliquary’. Blackwell suggests that ‘it is even possible that the roughly

carved internal wooden box was originally a saint's possession, precious in its own right, which was only later clad in metal plates to venerate and protect it'.<sup>391</sup>

However, this interpretation does not account for the actual construction of the Monymusk shrine nor its relation to other types of Insular or Continental containers.

Within the archaeological record, there exist other contemporary containers from within and outside Britain and Ireland that, when compared with Insular house-shaped shrines, further suggest that Insular house-shaped shrines are purpose-built composite shrines. For example, one means of attaching a lid to a container without the use of hinges is to attach a sliding panel, which can be seen with a sixth- to ninth-century leather worker's toolkit discovered in Evie, Orkney [Figure 61].<sup>392</sup> Here, much like wooden-core Insular house-shaped shrines, a rectangular box is carved from a single block of wood. While the lid no longer survives, the grooves in which the lid would have slid into place do; a hollowed lip was carved around three sides of the box, which would have allowed the lid of the box to sit flush against the container. Indeed, other Insular containers show that sliding lids were a viable means of attaching a lid to a container. A similar type of artefact was even carved from stone: a sixth- to seventh-century container was found in Dromiskin, Co. Louth, Ireland in the 1940s and offers a more specific link to Insular ecclesiastical space by its interment in an eighth-century grave [Figures 62.A-B].<sup>393</sup> The containers were found inside a male grave, near the skull. The sandstone box was carved with a flat, sliding lid and was covered with pieces of leather. Inside of this box, a smaller wooden box of similar construction was also found; inside the wooden container, a

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<sup>391</sup> Alice Blackwell, 'Individuals', in *Early Medieval Scotland: Individuals, Communities and Ideas*, ed. David Clarke, Alice Blackwell, and Martin Goldberg (Edinburgh: NMS Enterprises, 2012), 36.

<sup>392</sup> Jenni Calder, *The Wealth of a Nation* (Edinburgh: Richard Drew Publishing, 1989), 102, 107.

<sup>393</sup> Ryan, 'Metalwork in the Museo dell'Abbazia', 104.

ring-headed pin and pieces of charcoal were found. It is difficult to determine if the containers were constructed or used as a shrine, but their connection to a Christian grave is noteworthy.<sup>394</sup> Still, containers with sliding lids are by no means unique to the British Isles. Containers with similar lids not only predate the above Insular containers but are found across Europe and the Mediterranean, from a fifth-century thumb-sized gold box discovered inside a stone sarcophagus-shaped shrine in the Cathedral of Pula, Croatia to a bone box found in a sixth-century female grave in Heilbronn, Germany [Figures 63-4].<sup>395</sup> Indeed, while chapter five will discuss the relationship between Insular house-shaped shrines and ecclesiastical architecture, it is important to note here that there exist hundreds of late antique sarcophagi-shaped shrines from across the Mediterranean and Continental Europe that feature sliding tops, recessed lips, or hinged lids [Figure 65], perhaps indicating an ancient ‘genetic link’ between Insular house-shaped shrines and these smaller sarcophagi-shaped containers.<sup>396</sup>

Even accounting for the possibility that the wood used in constructing the cores of Insular house-shaped shrines may predate their overall construction, there is no evidence to suggest that the lid and container were capable of functioning as a box

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<sup>394</sup> For more on internment of boxes in medieval graves as prestige markers, reliquaries, or both see, Dieter Quast, 'Christian Relics in Early Medieval Graves', *Gausac* 34-35 (2009): 23-44; Catherine Hills, 'Work-boxes or Reliquaries? Small Copper-alloy Containers in Seventh-Century Anglo-Saxon Graves', in *Studies in Early Anglo-Saxon Art and Archaeology: Papers in Honour of Martin G. Welch*, ed. Stuart Brookes, Sue Harrington, and Andrew Reynolds (Oxford: BAR British Series, 2011), 14-9.

<sup>395</sup> Similar Merovingian caskets from Maroeuil, Maastricht, and Flörsheim-Weilbach exist, yet they too have been reconstructed. For more on the construction of bone caskets see, Arthur MacGregor, *Bone, Antler, Ivory and Horn: The Technology of Skeletal Materials Since the Roman Period* (London: Routledge, 2014); Hjörvardur Harvart Arnason, 'Early Christian Silver of North Italy and Gaul', *The Art Bulletin* 20, no. 2 (1938): 220-3.

<sup>396</sup> A more thorough discussion of sarcophagi-shaped shrines can be found in, Helmut Buschhausen, *Die spätromischen Metallschreine und frühchristlichen Reliquiare* (Wien: Böhlau, 1971); Alexander Minchev, *Early Christian Reliquaries from Bulgaria* (Varna: Varna Regional Museum of History, 2003); Marie-Christine Comte, *Les reliquaires du Proche-Orient et de Chypre à la Période ProtoByzantine* (Turnhout: Brepols Publishers, 2012); Ayşe Aydin, *Reliquaries of the Sarcophagus Type* (Antalya: Baski, 2011).

without the shrine's metalwork or were constructed to be so capable. Taking this into account, the lack of any sliding grooves within the group suggests that the wooden cores were purposely carved without them. Indeed, there is further evidence in the archaeological record which shows how containers could be constructed without hinged lids. To elucidate how a box without hinges could function, I have included a small Visigothic ivory box, currently held by the Glencairn Museum in Bryn Athyn, Pennsylvania, as it is roughly contemporary with Insular house-shaped shrines and of a similar form [Figures 66.A-F]. The overall construction of the box consists of carved ivory panels, held together by cast copper-alloy pins. The ivories themselves have been dated from approximately the eighth century based on stylistic analysis.<sup>397</sup> In this case, the lid is held in place on top of the container by means of a raised lip that follows along the edges of the box [Figure 66.F]. This prevents the box's lid from falling off if it is moved or lightly knocked. A similar lip is found on other Insular containers, as seen with the eighth-century Anglo-Saxon Franks casket [Figures 67.A-G]. While the casket was fitted with hinges, a thin lip was also carved along each panel, which helped to prevent the lid from sliding [Figures 67.F-G]. In comparison, as seen with the Ranvaik shrine, Insular house-shaped shrines with wooden cores lack any lip or recessed space that would have helped to further secure the lid to the container [Figures 19.F-G].

In comparison, perhaps most telling is an eleventh-century Anglo-Saxon boxwood shrine currently in the care of the Cleveland Museum [Figures 68.A-D].<sup>398</sup>

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<sup>397</sup> Danielle Perrier, 'Die spanische Kleinkunst des 11. Jahrhunderts: Zur Klärung ihrer stilistischen Zusammenhänge im Hinblick auf die Frage ihrer Beziehungen zur Monumentalskulptur', *Aachener Kunstblätter* 52 (1984): 38-9.

<sup>398</sup> Philip Nelson, 'IV.—An Ancient Box-Wood Casket', *Archaeologia Second Series*, 86 (1937): 91-100; Webster, *Anglo-Saxon Art: A New History*, 204-5.



While the shrine rests a century outside of the period of Insular house-shaped shrine production, its link to Anglo-Saxon culture and overall construction merits its inclusion as a later *comparandum*. Of note to my argument are three aspects of the shrine's construction: 1) its lid and container were carved from single blocks of wood; 2) it was fitted with hinges and a lock, which were incorporated into the composition of the carvings; and 3) the interior edges of the lid and box are smooth. In this instance, the construction of the boxwood shrine again points to specific understandings of how best to secure a hinged lid to a container. Over the course of my fieldwork I found that there is no extant Insular house-shaped shrine that features a lip or recess along the edges of the shrine, evidence for multiple hinges, reworking of the wood to suggest that a lip was sanded down, or a groove for a sliding lid; the existence of nonwooden-core Insular house-shaped shrines further challenges Blackwell's idea that the wooden cores of Insular house-shaped shrines are enshrined relics.

The accessibility of Insular house-shaped shrines is made even more apparent when their construction is compared with other forms of contemporary Insular enshrinements. Belt-, bell-, and book-shrines each offer comparative shrine models that deal with accessibility in different ways; this can help to elucidate how the accessibility of Insular house-shaped shrines relates to their function. I begin this examination with one of the few complete contemporary shrines to survive. In 1943, a turf cutter discovered the Moylough belt-shrine in a bog near Tubbercurry, Co. Sligo; however, continued turf cutting at the site quickly destroyed any further

archaeological insights the site could have offered, including whether the belt-shrine appeared to be deliberately buried or was lost by chance or accident.<sup>399</sup>

In regard to its basic construction, the Moylough belt-shrine is composed of four copper-alloy segments decorated with champlevé enamel, *millefiori*, silver panels, coloured glass studs, and metal inlays [Figure 69]. Sections of tinning can still be seen on the outside of the shrine; originally, it would have appeared more like a shrine constructed from silver than its present warm copper tones suggest. At the moment, the Moylough belt-shrine is the only surviving medieval belt-shaped reliquary, although belt buckles with small chambers, such as the buckles found in the Prittlewell and Sutton Hoo burials, may have also held relics.<sup>400</sup> The Moylough relic, a leather belt, was cut into four sections, then sandwiched between two thin sheets of tinned copper alloy that were sealed with riveted C-shaped bindings. These segments are connected by hinges, and at the belt's centre, a faux belt clasp could be opened or closed by moving a small pin.<sup>401</sup> The shrine thus removes the relic from direct physical touch, preserving the leather in perpetuity instead by completely covering it. Still, the faux buckle preserves some aspects of the belt's original functionality.<sup>402</sup> In contrast, the locking mechanisms of house-shaped shrines indicate that while house-shaped shrines were constructed to secure their contents, they specifically allowed continual access to their interiors. Equally, there is little evidence to suggest that any surviving Insular house-shaped shrine completely

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<sup>399</sup> Michael Duignan, 'The Moylough (Co. Sligo) and Other Irish Belt-Reliquaries', *Journal of the Galway Archaeological and Historical Society* 24, no. 3/4 (1951): 83-86.

<sup>400</sup> Quast, 'Relics in Early Medieval Graves', 38-40.

<sup>401</sup> Michael J. O'Kelly, 'The Belt-shrine from Moylough, Sligo', *The Journal of the Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland* 95, no. 1/2 (1965): 162-6.

<sup>402</sup> The intimacy created by wearing the shrine and symbolically inhabiting the body of the saint is further discussed in, Overbey, *Sacral Geographies*, 188-91.

removed its container from its mechanical functions to a more symbolic form thereof.

Other Insular shrines allowed for various degrees of access to their relics or interior spaces. While the bells found inside many Insular bell-shrines date from as early as the seventh century, making them contemporary with the earliest possible date for Insular house-shaped shrines, unfortunately, their composite shrines typically date from after the eleventh century, which situates them after the period of production for Insular house-shaped shrines.<sup>403</sup> However, some insight is possible: by comparing eighth-century fragments of bell-shrines with later complete shrines, one can build a more complete picture of how eighth-century bell-shrines may have appeared.

One of the earliest fragments of a bell-shrine, dated from the eighth or ninth century, is the crest or handle of a bell shrine of unknown provenance, originally from the Killua Castle Collection [Figure 70].<sup>404</sup> The shrine fragment is hollow and D-shaped, constructed so as to accommodate the handle of the enshrined bell. Despite the fragment's size, we can discern that the shrine was portable and designed to be suspended, due to the presence of suspension fittings much like those on house-shaped shrines. In addition, the hollow centre of the bell-shrine fragment informs us that the shrine acted as an encasement for the bell, enclosing the relic inside. Due to the low survival rate of complete early bell-shrines, later examples are needed to complete the picture.

Continued access to the bells inside of bell-shrines was important, which likely influenced their construction. The *Betha Meic Creiche* records how water in

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<sup>403</sup> Bourke, 'Early Irish Hand-Bells', 62.

<sup>404</sup> *The Work of Angels*', 143-4.

which the bell of St Mac Crieche's was submerged was believed to have healing properties, while the physical touching of bells and other shrines were used to forge oaths and prove guilt or innocence until at least 1808, as seen with St Senan's bell, 'this saint's bell is still religiously preserved in the west of the county, and is called the golden bell, and many of the common people believe at this day, that to swear by it falsely would be immediately followed by convulsions and death'.<sup>405</sup> Drawing from later bell-shrines as windows to the possibilities surrounding earlier bell-shrine construction, relic bells could be accessed by moving a panel located on the bottom of the shrine. Such removable lower panels appear on the composite St Senan bell shrine [Figure 71], portions of which date from the eleventh-century, and on the twelfth-century Shrine of St Patrick's Bell [Figure 42.A-C], previously discussed in chapter one.<sup>406</sup>

The Shrine of St Patrick's Bell itself was constructed by creating a bell-shaped container with a series of riveted copper-alloy panels, which accommodated a bronzed iron bell from the seventh or eighth century. At the top of the shrine, a cast decorative handle was riveted to the container, while two carrying rings, seen on the sides of the bell shrine, would have allowed it to be suspended or worn [Figure 42.C]. Indeed, even the early ninth-century Killua fragment indicates that bell-shrines were portable objects or at the very least designed to be worn, perhaps during feast days as John O'Donovan records in 1835 with the St Cuileáin's bell shrine. In a letter of his Ordnance Survey, O'Donovan records that 'this chain O'Breslin threw

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<sup>405</sup> *Miscellanea Hagiographica Hibernica*, ed. Charles Plummer (Brussels: Société des Bollandistes, 1925), 83; Hely Dutton, *Statistical Survey of the County of Clare* (Dublin: The Dublin Society, 1808), 355.

<sup>406</sup> Crawford, 'A Descriptive List of Irish Shrines', 157-8; Overbey, *Sacral Geographies*, 120-3; Margaret Stokes, *Early Christian Art in Ireland* (London: For the Board of Education by Chapman and Hall, 1887), 213-4.

around his neck, and from (by) it the Bell hung down his breast'.<sup>407</sup> Further, O'Donovan 'requested of him to open the case (which could easily be done) that he might see if the Bell was gapped or had an inscription on it, but he would not'.<sup>408</sup> Within his letter, O'Donovan both records how the shrine would hang low on the chest, but also that the bell was easily accessed should the need arise.

Reflecting the long veneration of Insular relic bells, multiple stages of ornamentation and enshrinement are sometimes present, as seen most noticeably with the St Cuileáin bell shrine [Figure 72]. This bell-shrine was said to have been discovered in the early seventeenth century at Glenkeen, Co. Tipperary, in the hollow of a tree.<sup>409</sup> The bell inside the shrine is from approximately the seventh or eighth century, while its shrine has been dated from the late eleventh century.<sup>410</sup> The bell-shrine is in a highly fragmented state. Most noticeably, the middle section of the shrine was removed, leaving the bell exposed, while bronze sheets were attached directly to the sides and face of the bell. A crude outline of a cross can be seen on the front sheet, marking the outlines where a jewelled cross was once attached, although the cross was stolen in 1802.<sup>411</sup> An elaborate twelfth-century handle, decorated in silver, gold, and niello, rests on top of the bell, while the bottom portion of the shrine, perhaps originating from earlier than the shrine handle as suggested by the wear on its panels, slightly elevates the bell off the ground. The choice to directly

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<sup>407</sup> *Ordnance Survey Letters Donegal*, ed. Michael Herity (Dublin: Four Masters Press, 2000), 206.

<sup>408</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>409</sup> Thomas Lalor Cooke, 'Description of the Barnaan Cuilawn, and Some Conjectures upon the Original Use Thereof; Together with an Account of the Superstitious Purposes to Which it was Latterly Applied. Also a Description of the Remains of an Ancient Mill, Which Were Recently Discovered Near the Ruins of Glankeen Church, in the County of Tipperary', *The Transactions of the Royal Irish Academy* 14 (1825): 34-5.

<sup>410</sup> Crawford, 'A Descriptive List of Irish Shrines', 162.

<sup>411</sup> Ó Floinn, *Irish Shrines and Reliquaries*, 8, 34.

attach decorative panels to the bell is noteworthy as it collapses the space between relic and reliquary.

While bell-shrines appear to allow some accessibility, some book-shrines completely sealed their contents away, much as the Moylough belt-shrine did. Unfortunately, the only book-shrine dated from the eighth or ninth century is the Lough Kinale shrine.<sup>412</sup> The Lough Kinale book-shrine and a series of small decorated objects were discovered by divers in 1986 near a small crannog in Lough Kinale, Co. Longford [Figure 73].<sup>413</sup> The shrine was found in a fragmented state, appearing to have been forcibly opened, possibly placed in a bag, and then left or lost to the waters.<sup>414</sup> The fragments consist of a copper-alloy cover, a wooden core, carrying straps, fragments of side plates, and corner bindings. The ornamentation of the shrine consists of five large decorative bosses and interlaced panels forming a cross. Flanking this central cross are four flatter circular mounts decorated with spirals. Kelly has compared the overall ornamentation of the shrine to Insular carpet pages.<sup>415</sup> Regarding access, Kelly further notes that the shrine would have been sealed closed. Its overall dimensions make it the largest of the surviving book shrines.<sup>416</sup>

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<sup>412</sup> Kelly notes the use of La Tène ornamentation, the lack of inscriptions on the shrine, and the use of tinning as opposed to silver and gold plates granted the shrine a date from the late eighth or ninth-century, Eamonn P. Kelly, 'Security and Sanctity: The Ecclesiastical Metalwork of Lough Kinale', *Irish Arts Review* 23, no. 1 (2006): 107-8.

<sup>413</sup> Robert T. Farrell, Eamonn P. Kelly, and Margaret Gowan, 'The Crannóg Archaeological Project (CAP), Republic of Ireland I: A Pre-preliminary Report', *International Journal of Nautical Archaeology* 18, no. 2 (1989): 123-36.

<sup>414</sup> Eamonn P. Kelly, 'The Lough Kinale Book-Shrine', in *The Age of Migrating Ideas: Early Medieval Art in Northern Britain and Ireland*, ed. Michael Spearman and John Higgitt (Edinburgh: National Museums Scotland, 1993), 168.

<sup>415</sup> 'The Lough Kinale Shrine: The Implications for the Manuscripts', in *The Book of Kells. Proceedings of a Conference at Trinity College Dublin*, ed. Felicity O'Mahony (Dublin: Scholar Press, 1992), 281-3.

<sup>416</sup> 'Ecclesiastical Metalwork of Lough Kinale', 106-7.

Taking into account the accessibility of Insular enshrined relics, the wooden cores of Insular house-shaped shrines are likely not the enshrined chrismals of medieval saints, as they cannot be removed from their metalwork and there is no evidence that the wooden cores functioned as boxes prior to their current state. There is, however, one metalwork Insular house-shaped shrine that was possibly enshrined: the nested Lough Erne shrines. Notably, the smaller hip-roof box (B) of the Lough Erne shrine was discovered inside the larger casket (A). As noted in the previous chapter, Mullarkey's 1986 conservation report found that a thin coat of wax had been evenly spread across the surface of the shrine. Fossilised lake insects were also found in the wax, suggesting the wax was applied to the shrine before it was deposited into the lake, possibly to protect it from corrosion. Lough Erne (B) fills the interior space of Lough Erne (A), which would have made it difficult to add other contents. This suggests that the smaller shrine may have been an enshrined *chrismal* or *capsa* of an Insular saint, much like the bells secured inside the St Senan and St Patrick bell-shrines. While it is difficult to determine what the specific final functions of the Lough Erne shrines were, they are the only set of Insular house-shaped shrines that were found nested. Moreover, unlike the bell-shrines discussed above, the removable content of the Lough Erne (A) was not the wooden core of its shrine, but a house-shaped shrine constructed only from metal, which further indicates that the wooden core of the Lough Erne (A) shrine was not an enshrinement itself, although the smaller shrine (B) may have been.

In my examinations of the shrines, I have found no evidence for major reworking prior to their overall construction and repairs. Indeed, the scoring found on the side of the Melhus shrine follows the placement of its bronze panels, while

sections of the lid were cut away to provide room for the terminals of its composite ridgepole [Figures 16.A-B]. Other early medieval terminal fragments found within the River Blackwater suggest that notching the shrine's gables would have been more common than the present number of shrines indicates. The interior of Insular house-shaped shrines was not designed to preserve or conceal wooden boxes; rather, it was a space for the keeping of other objects and materials. Thus, it is clear that the accessibility of Insular house-shaped shrines differed in notable ways from other contemporary Insular shrines. However, that does not yet tell us whether Insular house-shaped shrines are unique in their construction or whether other parallels can be found in the construction of contemporary medieval religious containers.

Citing variations in the construction of Insular and Continental shrines, scholars such as Victor Elbern, Neil O'Donoghue, and Archdale King have used the accessibility of ecclesiastical containers to suggest various functions for Insular house-shaped shrines, including reliquary, Eucharistic container, and chrismatory.<sup>417</sup> Rather than produce a derivative and exhaustive list of each *comparandum*, I have chosen to focus on shrines with specific connections to the house-shaped shrines, either stylistically or through potential historic connections to sites of Insular monastic activity.

One such Continental shrine with Anglo-Saxon ornamentation was found within the cathedral collection of St. Mariä Himmelfahrt, Chur, Switzerland [Figures 74.A-E]. The eighth-century shrine is a composite piece of gilt copper-alloy panels that have been nailed to a wooden core.<sup>418</sup> Interlacing and nine glass cabochons, only

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<sup>417</sup>Victor H. Elbern, 'Ein frühmittelalterliches Chrismale in New York', *Arte medievale* 2 (2002): 20; O'Donoghue, 'Insular Chrismals and House-Shaped Shrines', 86-8; Archdale Arthur King, *Eucharistic Reservation in the Western Church* (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1965), 39.

<sup>418</sup> Quast, *Reliquienkästchen aus Ennabeuren*, 124.



four of which survive, decorate the front of the shrine, which Conway describes as ‘continental’ in appearance.<sup>419</sup> The right-side panel of the shrine also features a ringed cross between two interlace beasts, while two birds in the upper register consume grapes from a vine. These motifs repeat on the left side-panel, although on that side, the two interlace beasts flank a triquetra. The back of the shrine features two panels, one seventh- and the other twelfth-century.<sup>420</sup> Elbern suggests that the repetition of grapes and birds could indicate the shrine was meant to contain a portion of the Eucharist rather than relics.<sup>421</sup> In this example, there is no separate wooden lid or container; the wooden core of the shrine was carved from a single block of wood and resembles the overall three-dimensional form of an Insular house-shaped shrine. Rather, the shrine is a single piece, and the interior cavity of the shrine is created by carving out the bottom of the container, which was then made accessible by moving a sliding panel.

Notably, Elbern and O’Donoghue argue that this shrine, typically referred to as a purse-shaped shrine, was not a reliquary but rather a container for the Eucharist, as it depicts vine scrolls and, as the moveable bottom panel suggests, the contents of the shrine needed to be regularly accessible. Drawing on traditions of displaying the Eucharist in decorative containers, the above scholars theorise that the inclusion of a sliding panel in the design of the shrine suggests that the contents needed to be regularly changed, due to various injunctions against corrupting the Eucharist

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<sup>419</sup> Conway, 'Portable Reliquaries', 234-5.

<sup>420</sup> Thurre, 'Le reliquaire d'Altheus', 170.

<sup>421</sup> Victor H. Elbern, 'Das frühmittelalterliche Bursenreliquiar von Muotathal', in *Corolla Heremitana: neue Beiträge zur Kunst und Geschichte Einsiedelns und der Innerschweiz*, ed. Alfred A. Schmidt, Albert Knoepfli, and Maximilian Roesle (Freiburg im Breisgau: Olten, 1964), 15-31.

through neglect.<sup>422</sup> Other purse-shaped shrines [Figures 75.A-B] sealed their contents behind nailed or riveted panels that were then covered in decorative metalwork; the only way to access the relics contained within this type of shrine was to disassemble the shrine itself.<sup>423</sup> Indeed, O'Donoghue and Elbern argue that the accessibility of Insular house-shaped shrines, when compared with the Continental material, suggests that the containers were reserved for the enshrinement of the Eucharist or liturgical oils. This, however, ignores the carrying of relics in *capsae* discussed in the previous chapter.

One shrine closer in construction to Insular house-shaped shrines is a casket that the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, acquired in 1965 from the collection of Ruth and Leopold Blumka [Figures 76.A-E].<sup>424</sup> This sixth- to eighth-century casket is constructed from panels of bone decorated with incised and painted geometric patterns. While no documentation pertaining to the shrine's acquisition lists any known contents, Elbern argues that the shrine is a chrismal, in particular, one used for baptism, 'wir das New Yorker Beinkästchen als ein Chrismale, das heißt als Behältnis der für Taufe, 'confirmatio', Eucharistiespendung und Krankensalbung bereiteten sakramentalen Materien'.<sup>425</sup> Elbern does this by comparing the overall form of the container to the Mortain shrine, noting the latter's inscription, which refers to the container as a chrismal. Elbern then argues that since the bone shrine shares similar constructional elements with the Mortain shrine, notably a moveable

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<sup>422</sup> I discuss this more in chapter one, but see also Snoek, *Medieval Piety from Relics to the Eucharist*, 91-101.

<sup>423</sup> Smith, 'Portable Christianity', 155.

<sup>424</sup> Quast, *Reliquienkästchen aus Ennabeuren*, 127.

<sup>425</sup> 'the New York bone-box is a Chrismal, that is a container for Baptism, confirmation, which prepared the sacramental material for the dispensing of the Eucharist and Extreme Unction', Elbern, 'Ein frühmittelalterliches Chrismale in New York', 22.

lid and evidence for suspension straps—holes on the sides of the shrine are in similar positions to those on Insular house-shaped and Continental purse-shaped shrines—the bone shrine should be classified as a chrismal and not a reliquary.<sup>426</sup> Elbern further cites St Boniface’s injunction against clergy travelling without chrism oil or the Eucharist as further evidence that that bone shrine may have functioned as a chrismal.<sup>427</sup> While containers that functioned as chrismals in this fashion likely existed, without documentation, surviving contents, or further scientific analysis of any trace amounts of oil or perfume, it is difficult to ascertain which containers would have held particular forms of sacral matter, let alone if the types of contents shifted over the course of a container’s use-lives. Still, further insights are possible by contextualising Insular house-shaped shrines in terms of those of their Continental counterparts which share the most features in common.

In 1862, a farmer allegedly discovered one such Continental shrine with similar features to Insular house-shaped shrines in an empty field near the River Waal, in the vicinity of Teil, near Nijmegen, Netherlands [Figures 77.A-E]. The shrine was quickly acquired by the director of the Archebischöflichen Museum, now the Museum Catharijneconvent, Utrecht, Netherlands.<sup>428</sup> Its construction and metallurgy are similar to the Warnerbertus shrine’s, which suggests it was produced

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<sup>426</sup> Ibid., 9-11, 21-4.

<sup>427</sup> ‘After this the statute is: the priests will not depart without the sacred chrism, and the blessed oil, and the holy Eucharist, (namely that) is his duty to find them before he departs’, ‘Postea statutum est «ut presbyteri sine sacro chrismate, et oleo benedicto, et sacra Eucharistia alicubi non proficiscantur, (nempe ut) ad officium suum statim inveniantur parati’, in ‘Quod statutum sancto Bonifacio archiepiscopo Moguntino tribuitur in Spicilegii tomo IX’, *De liturgia Gallicana liber primus*, ed. J. P. Mingé, vol. 72, *Patrologia Latina* (Paris: Garnier et Migne, 1849), Col.0150B; ‘Ein frühmittelalterliches Chrismale in New York’, 21.

<sup>428</sup> Victor H. Elbern, ‘Das Gandersheimer Runenkästchen: Versuch einer ikonographischen Synthese’, in *Das Gandersheimer Runenkästchen: Internationales Kolloquium*, ed. Regine Marth (Braunschweig: Herzog-Anton-Ulrich-Museum, 2000), 115; Hunvald, ‘The Warnerbertus Reliquary’.

in the same workshop.<sup>429</sup> Vertical slots along the interior of the hip-roof casket from Utrecht suggest it was originally divided into three sections, although the contents do not survive.<sup>430</sup> Like the Bologna shrine, the panels of the Utrecht shrine are gilt cast copper alloy. Another similarity between the two shrines is the finger-joint roof hinge, which is also found on the Clonmore and Bobbio shrines. Finally, two small holes found on top of the shrine could indicate that it once held a ridgepole, and fragmented suspension fittings can be found on the sides of the shrine.

Rosettes, palmettes, crosses, chalices, and stylised vines decorate the Utrecht shrine's panels. The front of the shrine features a central rosette and green glass cabochon flanked by two equal-arm crosses with stylised vines springing from their arms [Figure 77.A]. The sides of the shrine are identical to each other, depicting vines rising out of chalices [Figures 77.C-D]; this design repeats on the bottom of the box and the back lid [Figures 77.B, E]. The back-box panel is filled with stylised 'Byzantine' palms. The entire shrine is filled with plant life, while the crosses on the face of the shrine recall the *arbor vitae*; as noted by Egon Wamers, the vine-filled chalices or 'chalices of life' could be linked to the *fons vitae* as well.<sup>431</sup> Wamers points out that the meaning behind these symbols is connected to larger Christian themes rather than specific functions, 'there is no need to cite reasons here why this motif of the *fons vitae*, for which there is much evidence in early Christian art in

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<sup>429</sup> 'The Warnebertus Reliquary', 114-5.

<sup>430</sup> Ingrid de Wit, 'Merovingisch reliekschrijntje uit de omgeving van Nijmegen', *Catharijebrief* 66 (1999): 9-12.

<sup>431</sup> The *arbor vitae* representing the Tree of Life as the Living Cross of Christ and its promises of resurrection while the *fons vitae* or Font of Life is aligned with Baptism and Psalm 42 see, Christine Milner, 'Lignum Vitae' or 'Crux Gemmata'? The Cross of Golgotha in the Early Byzantine Period', *Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies* 20, no. 1 (1996): 77-99; Paul A. Underwood, 'The Fountain of Life in Manuscripts of the Gospels', *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 5 (1950): 41-138; Margaret English Frazer, 'Church Doors and the Gates of Paradise: Byzantine Bronze Doors in Italy', *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 27 (1973): 145-62.

conjunction with paradisiacal vegetation, points to the Eucharist and thus to the sacrificial death of Jesus, the Last Supper and the promise of salvation which this implies'.<sup>432</sup>

While the motifs of the *fons vitae* and *arbor vitae* are connected to the rites of Baptism and the Eucharist, scholars such as Hunvald are cautious in their interpretations of the shrine,

the emphasis on the chalice image, which appears in four places, suggests that it may have been part of a communion vessel, possibly made to accompany the Warnebertus shrine. Since it is too small to hold communion elements perhaps it held relics, which, together with vessels in the larger casket, constituted the necessary constitutes of a personal or travelling chapel.<sup>433</sup>

Indeed, multiple types of sacral contents could be placed inside the shrine due to its general ornamentation, specifically in regard to the wider applicability of early Christian iconography vis-à-vis relics, the Eucharist, or chrism oil. However, the suggestion that the shrine's ornamentation would prohibit it from carrying various forms of sacral matter is at odds with the appearance of such widespread Christian motifs and symbols; thus, these ornamentations cannot provide sufficient evidence for functionality on their own. Still, the Utrecht shrine lacks one important constructional element that is present across the group of Insular house-shaped shrines—an internal locking mechanism—which suggests it was less portable in regard to its base construction than Insular house-shaped shrines were.

I have found one Continental shrine constructed with a hinged hip-roof, suspension fittings, and a locking pin that was produced within the same general period as Insular house-shaped shrines: the seventh-century Theoderic shrine

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<sup>432</sup> Egon Wamers, 'Behind Animals, Plants and Interlace: Salin's Style II on Christian Objects', *Proceedings of the British Academy* 157 (2009): 159.

<sup>433</sup> Hunvald, 'The Warnebertus Reliquary', 119-20.

[Figures 78.A-B], from the abbey of Saint Maurice-d'Agaune, Saint-Maurice, Switzerland, located in a region that saw the movement of Insular monks and the establishment of Insular monasteries.<sup>434</sup> The shrine was constructed by nailing panels of copper alloy to a hollowed out wooden box.<sup>435</sup> These panels were further decorated with cloisonné enamel in red, green, blue, and white, while cameos were arranged to form X-shaped crosses on the face and sides of the shrine.<sup>436</sup> On the back of the shrine an inscription can be found, which Galletti transcribes as, 'TE / UDERI / GUSPRES / BITER / INHO / NURES CIMA / RICHIFIERII / USSIT AMEN / NORDOALUS / ETHRIHL INDIS / ORDENARUNT / FABRIGARE / UN DIHO / ETELLO / FICER UNT: Teuderigus presbiter in honore sancti Mauricii fieri iussit. Amen. Nordoalaus et Rihlindis ordenarunt fabrigare. Undiho et Ello ficerunt'.<sup>437</sup> As with the Altheus inscription discussed in chapter one, the Theoderic shrine informs the viewer that it was made in honour of a saint at the behest of its patrons. While the inscription is extensive, its presence on the back of the shrine suggests that its message was meant for whoever wore or handled the shrine. In contrast, the more public side of the shrine prominently features a large cameo, possibly depicting St Maurice.<sup>438</sup>

While the ornamentation on the shrine is arresting, I would like to point to four primary constructional similarities between the Theoderic shrine and Insular

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<sup>434</sup> Picard and Balbulus, 'Adomnán's "Vita Columbae"', 2; Louis Gougaud, *Gaelic Pioneers of Christianity: The Work and Influence of Irish Monks and Saints in Continental Europe (VIth-VIIth Cent.)* (Dublin: M. H. Gill, 1923), 42-54.

<sup>435</sup> Quast, *Reliquienkästchen aus Ennabeuren*, 112.

<sup>436</sup> G. A. S. Snijder, 'Antique and Mediaeval Gems on Bookcovers at Utrecht', *The Art Bulletin* 14, no. 1 (1932): 37-49.

<sup>437</sup> 'The priest Theoderic commanded this to be made in honour of St Maurice. Nordoalaus and Rihlindis ordered it to be built. Undiho and Ello made it.', Galletti, 'Ex romano vitro splendentes lapilli', 179.

<sup>438</sup> *Ibid.*, 183.

house-shaped shrines: 1) the Theoderic shrine was constructed by covering a rectangular box with metal panels; 2) this box could be opened from the top by moving a hinged hip-roof; 3) suspension fittings are placed on the side of the shrine, thus allowing it to be carried or worn; and 4) an interior locking pin would have allowed it to be locked exactly as Insular house-shaped shrines were locked. This is not to assert that there exists a direct link between Insular house-shaped shrines and the Theoderic shrine, but rather to suggest there is evidence for a similar type of shrine being constructed on the Continent, Britain, and Ireland contemporaneously. Thus, Insular house-shaped shrines have stronger parallels with the Theoderic shrine than with purse-shaped shrines. Indeed, the Theoderic shrine is comparable in overall size to the Lough Erne (A) shrine.

However, in both cases, the question of function remains. While the inscription on the Theoderic shrine mentions it was made in honour of St Maurice, it does not explicitly state whether the shrine was meant to contain his relics. Conway suggest that the shrine may have functioned as a *ministerium*—a travelling container that would have held a small chalice, paten, portable altar, and the Eucharist—but this function cannot be unequivocally applied to the shrine, as no specific elements of its design or ornamentation specify what it may have originally contained.<sup>439</sup> What can be said is that the patrons of the Theoderic shrine commissioned a casket whose contents could be either changed or more easily accessed. Indeed, Hahn notes that

such *capsae* were not so different from the *chrismale* containing Eucharistic bread that priests and bishops typically carried with them when they voyaged (and there is sometimes confusion). A simple extrapolation suggests that purses were carried among the people by representatives of the Church, and it was their grace that was ‘dispensed’.<sup>440</sup>

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<sup>439</sup> Conway, 'Portable Reliquaries', 223.

<sup>440</sup> Hahn, *Strange Beauty*, 107.

In other words, portable shrines of this type shared connotations of disbursement of divine grace.

Hahn's mention of disbursing blessings is key to understanding the functionality of Insular house-shaped shrines and its relationship to their construction. The constructional features of wooden-core Insular house-shaped shrines indicate that they were likely not enshrined relics. Rather, they are complete containers in their own right, and their interiors were reserved for various forms of sacral matter that could be removed and indeed disbursed as witnessed in chapter one's discussion of the terms connected with house-shaped shrines, such as *capsa*, *chrismal*, *minister*, and *scrin*.

## **Conclusion**

As discussed in the introduction to this thesis, while the exteriors of Insular house-shaped shrines have dominated the academic debate, turning our attention to their construction allows for further insight. This chapter has addressed major constructional aspects of Insular house-shaped shrines and examined how their accessibility differed from a selection of contemporary Insular and Continental portable shrines. Notably, within the group of Insular house-shaped shrines some general conclusions can be made about potential subgroups, first according to the principle means of construction—whether wooden-core or constructed entirely from metal—then, within the latter category, according to how the shrine's panels were held in place—primarily through soldering, through soldering and a metal frame, or by attaching panels directly to a metal core.



Regarding the group as a whole, Insular house-shaped shrines with Anglo-Saxon ornamentation show noticeable constructional variations from the other shrines, such as ringed suspension fittings, figural iconography, and alternative ridgepoles or terminals. While the Anglo-Saxon shrines merit a place within the group of Insular shrines, some differences between the potential regional groups can be seen, possibly due to more direct ties between Anglo-Saxon England and the Continent as opposed to the emphasis on exile and pilgrimage witnessed in Irish monastic networks.

Regarding aspects of accessibility, Insular house-shaped shrines can be definitively described as lockable boxes with hinged, hip-roof lids. As this graph shows, the majority of shrines within the group were constructed with dual back hinges [Figure 79]; dual back hinges appear on the Amiata [Figure 20.B], Bologna [Figure 23.C], Emly [Figure 9.C], Lough Erne (A-B) [Figures 5.B, 6.B], Melhus [Figure 16.B], Monymusk [Figure 14.B], Mortain [Figure 26.B], Ranvaik [Figure 19.B], and Setnes shrines [Figure 17.B], while piano hinges appear on the Bobbio, Clonmore [Figure 10.J], and Shannon shrines [Figure 4.C]. Unfortunately, the Brussels, Clonard, Hokksund, and London shrines are too fragmented to determine if they were constructed with dual hinges or piano hinges, although dual hinges were apparently more common.

Moreover, it is unlikely that the wooden cores are the enshrined relics of medieval saints. Indeed, Insular house-shaped shrines share more in common with Insular crosiers, which also used wooden cores as supports, than they do with bell-, belt-, or book-shrines. Specifically, the wooden cores of Insular house-shaped shrines could not be removed from their metal panels, as was the case for some relics of

some bell- and book-shrines, nor did the metal panels completely seal off the wooden core from direct contact. Not only does the wood of Insular house-shaped shrines not show signs of reworking, save for the Moissac shrine, the accessibility of the shrines indicates that they were designed to be portable, secure, and accessible. Unlike purse-shaped shrines, Insular house-shaped shrines were designed to do more than merely imply the dispensation of grace; indeed, their moveable and lockable hinged lids, especially in conjunction with their suspension fittings, intrinsically linked their physicality to the keeping and disbursal of sacral matter and divine blessings.



## Chapter 4

### **Precious Exteriors and Hollowed Adornments: The Interplay Between Materiality and Ornament on Insular House-shaped Shrines**

This chapter examines the social and religious motivations that may have influenced the various materials used and ornament employed on Insular house-shaped shrines, while also noting the significance of these materials as potential markers of origin. Insular house-shaped shrines were typically constructed from materials linked to established Biblical hierarchies of precious materials connected chiefly with saintly visions and the Heavenly Jerusalem. In tandem with the shrines' ornamentation, the materials emphasise these heavenly themes. While the use of vegetal ornament and the placement of decorative escutcheons are typically linked to specific and singular contents for the shrines, such as the Eucharist, the examination in this chapter shows good reason to question the strength of that link, and good reason to suspect that triangular compositions and common motifs like vine scroll reflect wider Christian themes of resurrection, protection, and spiritual purity. There is particular concern over displaying the Trinity as a potential apotropaic marker, added to protect the holy contents of the shrine and its keeper.

To begin this examination, it is first necessary to define what I mean by *materiality* and *ornament*. For this, I turn to the definition set out by Elizabeth DeMarrais, Chris Gosden, and Colin Renfrew who describe materiality as,

not only the study of the characteristics of objects, but also the more general notion that humans engage with the things of the world as conscious agents and are themselves shaped by those experiences...[materiality] emphasize[s] the ways that

power and authority develop through control over material and symbolic resources, labour, or knowledge.<sup>441</sup>

Materiality thus addresses how objects and their materials function in both literal and symbolic terms. Because of the religious nature of Insular house-shaped shrines and the variety of hagiographic incidents describing the miraculous power of ecclesiastical objects, viewing Insular house-shaped shrines through the lens of materiality further helps to elucidate the cultural importance of these objects and indeed their perceived agency. This makes DeMarrais, Gosden, and Renfrew's definition all the more appropriate. Furthermore, Bynum's work on materiality and Christian art cites the Incarnation of Christ, in which the Word of God is made flesh—which is itself matter—as support for using this particular lens through which to view cultic objects.<sup>442</sup> Indeed, as Christina Toren observes, 'body and mind, the biological and the cultural, the material and the ideal, are aspects of one another, rather than separate and dialectically related phenomena'.<sup>443</sup>

For a definition of *ornament*, I turn to Oleg Grabar's seminal examination of Islamic art and architecture. Grabar writes that ornament 'is differentiated from decoration in the sense that decoration is anything, even whole mosaic or sculpted programs, applied to an object or to a building, whereas ornament is the aspect of decoration which appears not to have another purpose but to enhance its carrier'.<sup>444</sup> Grabar's definition allows for ornament to exist within decoration, while subtly acknowledging that ornament 'appears' to have no other purpose; however, Grabar

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<sup>441</sup> Elizabeth DeMarrais, Chris Gosden and Colin Renfrew, 'Introduction', in *Rethinking Materiality: The Engagement of Mind with the Material World*, ed. Elizabeth DeMarrais, Chris Gosden and Colin Renfrew (Cambridge: Oxbow, 2004), 2.

<sup>442</sup> Bynum, *Christian Materiality*, 31-36.

<sup>443</sup> Christina Toren, *Mind, Materiality and History: Explorations in Fijian Ethnography* (London: Routledge, 1999), 4.

<sup>444</sup> Oleg Grabar, *The Mediation of Ornament* (Oxford: Princeton University Press, 1992), 5.

and other scholars have continually noted the importance of ornament.<sup>445</sup> Through the categorisation of ornamental motifs, scholars can track cultural exchange, rendering ornament into an important visual genetic marker.<sup>446</sup> Of specific interest to this chapter, ornament, through its ubiquitous presence, can also act as a subtle frame through which complex visual narratives and messages can be transferred in a manner similar to what Daniel Miller describes in *Materiality*. Developing upon E. H. Gombrich's social theory in *The Sense of Order*, in which social settings cue behaviour, and Erving Goffman's study of the physicality of frames in galleries in *Frame Analysis*, Miller writes,

the surprising conclusion is that objects are important not because they are evident and physically constrain or enable, but often because we do not "see" them. The less we are aware of them the more powerfully they can determine our expectations by setting the scene and ensuring normative behaviour, without being open to challenge. They determine what takes place to the extent that we are unconscious of their capacity to do so.<sup>447</sup>

As Grabar attests above, ornament is seemingly unimportant beyond its aesthetic appeals; however, as Miller shows, an object's acceptance and unquestioned presence can hold deep social meaning. For example, Douglas Mac Lean's analysis of snake bosses on stone sculpture is a good example of ornament in action as a contextualising device, 'since at least the 4<sup>th</sup> century, vine-scrolls had provided a beneficent image, a reference to redemption through the blood of the Lord. Iona

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<sup>445</sup> While only a partial list of available sources, the following examples provide ample opportunities to see the importance of ornament in academic enquiries: Carl Adam Johan Nordenfalk, *Celtic and Anglo-Saxon Painting* (New York: Braziller, 1977); Lawrence Nees, 'Ethnic and Primitive Paradigms in the Study of Early Medieval Art', in *Paradigms and Methods in Early Medieval Studies*, ed. Celia Chazelle and Felice Lifshitz (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 41-60; Isabel Henderson, 'Variations on an Old Theme: Panelled Zoomorphic Ornament on Pictish Sculpture at Nigg, Easter Ross, and St Andrews, Fife, and in the Book of Kells', in *The Insular Tradition*, ed. Catherine E. Karkov, Robert T. Farrell, and Michael Ryan (Albany: New York Press, 1997), 143-66.

<sup>446</sup> The importance of zoomorphic ornament as a marker of style and origin, as well as a potential means of dating, is well-attested. See, Wamers, 'Salin's Style II on Christian Objects', 151-204.

<sup>447</sup> Daniel Miller, 'Materiality: An Introduction', in *Materiality* ed. Daniel Miller (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005), 5.

snakes threaten not only each other, but also represent the evil that the Cross was erected to overcome'.<sup>448</sup> While snake motifs within Insular art do not universally imply the above meaning, their use on certain Ionian Christian monumental sculptures is both contextualised by the medium on which it appears and in turn contextualises the medium; the snakes as ornamental motif are best understood when engaging within their specific visual and material contexts.

Ornament thus provides a general frame in which artists can employ a variety of interconnected symbols and messages. While the materials and ornament of Insular house-shaped shrines are well-documented, until now, no analysis has yet examined the overall patterns of materials and ornament used in the construction of Insular house-shaped shrines nor the interaction between material and ornament. With this in mind, the first half of this chapter notes the general materials used to construct Insular house-shaped shrines and examines the potential economic, social, artistic, and religious possibilities for their employment. The second half of this chapter further contextualises these materials by interrogating them through the frame of ornamentation. As will be shown, the materials and ornament used to construct and adorn Insular house-shaped shrines are connected not only to the rich exegetical tradition of allegorical materials as markers for the heavenly, but the ornament found on Insular house-shaped shrines may have also performed an apotropaic function.

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<sup>448</sup> Douglas Mac Lean, 'Snake-Bosses and Redemption at Iona and in Pictland', in *The Age of Migrating Ideas: Early Medieval Art in Northern Britain and Ireland*, ed. Michael Spearman and John Higgitt (Edinburgh: National Museums Scotland 1993), 252.

## **Treasured and Earthly or Precious and Heavenly? The Use of Wood, Metal, Stone, and Glass**

This section explores how the materials used in the construction of Insular house-shaped shrines can be aligned with specific themes and meanings, from the use of yew as a possible wood support for the shrines and its connections to sacred space and holy objects to the use of metal, enamel, and glass. I begin by discussing how the wood employed in the construction of Insular house-shaped shrines was identified, while further exploring the significance of yew wood as a potential religious marker and readily available material. Next, I examine the use of metal alloys within this group and their relation to Biblical and exegetical hierarchies of precious materials, while paying particular attention to the use of tinned bronze and its potential relation to the Old Irish term *findruine*. Finally, I discuss the use of enamel, glass, and gemstones on the shrine and their possible use as allusions to the Heavenly Jerusalem.

### **Wood**

Within this group of Insular house-shaped shrines, three types of wood have been identified: yew, oak, and beech [Figure 80]. As Blindheim notes in his seminal study of ‘Irish-Scot’ house-shaped shrines, yew wood was used in the construction of the Amiata, Emly, Lough Erne (A), Melhus, Monymusk, Ranvaik, and Setnes shrines.<sup>449</sup> The genus identification was determined through a visual assessment of wood anatomical structures. For example, the Ranvaik shrine was examined by Kjeld

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<sup>449</sup> Blindheim, 'A House-Shaped Irish-Scots Reliquary', 33-52.



Christensen at the Vedanatomisk Laboratorium for the National Museum of Denmark. The box and lid were found to be of the same wood, yew (*Taxus* sp.). The examination was conducted in two steps: 1) Surface examination under direct light and 2) examination of four microspecimens taken from a small block extracted from the box (lab. Numbers 331-34).<sup>450</sup> The reliability of these examinations is not without question and would depend on the samples taken, the wood density, and other factors such as potential points of origin to help determine the specific genus. Still, *Taxus* is a dense conifer without resin canals, and an examination of an adequate sample's ray structure would render an identification fairly reliable outside genetic testing.<sup>451</sup> Moreover, the presence of dense yew forests in early medieval Ireland also provides another potential contextualising element to further suggest that the above identification is reliable.

Yew wood is not uncommon among Insular artefacts. Notable examples include an ornamented bucket, possibly used in ecclesiastical rites, which was found in an 1839 drainage work of the river Kinnegad; it is constructed using yew wood and copper alloy, while amber insets were used to decorate the carrying hinges.<sup>452</sup> Additionally, later artefacts such as the wooden box of the Domhnach Airgid and the wooden support of the Saint Manchán's shrine were also constructed from yew wood, as was the internal core of the Kells crosier.<sup>453</sup> Still, yew is not the only wood used in Insular ecclesiastical art. The cores of the Tully Lough cross and the Stowe

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<sup>450</sup> Anne Pedersen, E-mail to Samuel Gerace III, September, 28 2016.

<sup>451</sup> I would like to thank S. Douglas Kaylor of the Oak Ridge National Labs, Environmental Sciences Division for his elucidating discussion on genus identification of wood specimens.

<sup>452</sup> *The Work of Angels*, 121.

<sup>453</sup> Mac Dermott, 'Crosiers of St. Dymphna and St. Mel', 176; W. A. Oddy, and I. M. McIntyre, 'St. Mel's Crozier: Technical Examination and Report on Conservation and Restoration in 1971-2', *The Journal of the Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland* 103 (1973): 35; Overbey, *Sacral Geographies*, 154-60; *Treasures of Early Irish Art*, 217; George Petrie, 'An Account of an Ancient Irish Reliquary, Called the Domnach-Airgid', *The Transactions of the Royal Irish Academy* 18 (1839): 15.

Missal are both constructed from oak.<sup>454</sup> While scholars such as J. L. Delahunty, Vaughan Cornish, and Miranda Aldhouse-Green have commented on the use and importance of both oak and yew in pre-Christian Irish and British contexts, yew's absence in the Bible makes it difficult to conceptualise in an early medieval Christian context, symbolically speaking, as it does not specifically feature in Insular exegesis.<sup>455</sup> For example, the types of wood mentioned in Latin and Old Irish sources as relating to Christ's cross are listed as cedar, cypress, palm, olive, and beech or box-wood.<sup>456</sup> The yew tree does appear in non-exegetical literature such as the Old English Rune Poem, a seventh- or eighth-century work consisting of stanzas of twenty-nine Anglo-Saxon runes, from the British Library, Cotton Otho B.x manuscript. From this poem we can see that yew was regarded as a suitable source of lumber, '(Eoh) byþ ūtan unsmēþe trēow,/heard hrūsan fæst, hyrde fȳres,/wyrtrumun underwrepyd, wyn on ēþle'.<sup>457</sup> While Aldhelm also wrote a poem on the yew tree for his *Ænigmata*, the yew's wide affiliation with themes of death, eternal life, and resurrection appears after the twelfth century, primarily through commentary on the proximity of churches and their graveyards to ancient yew trees.<sup>458</sup>

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<sup>454</sup> *Treasures of Early Irish Art*, 184; Eamonn P. Kelly, 'Recovered Celtic Treasure', *Irish Arts Review* 20 (2003): 108-9.

<sup>455</sup> For more on this topic see, J. L. Delahunty, 'Yew Tree Toponyms and their Connection to the Irish Landscape', *FOCUS on Geography* 51, no. 4 (2009): 1-6; Vaughan Cornish, *The Churchyard Yew & Immortality* (London: Frederick Muller Ltd., 1946), 17-58; Miranda Aldhouse-Green, *Seeing the Wood for the Trees: The Symbolism of Trees and Wood in Ancient Gaul and Britain* (Aberystwyth: University of Wales Centre for Advanced Welsh and Celtic Studies, 2000).

<sup>456</sup> Martin McNamara, *The Apocrypha in the Irish Church* (Dublin: Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies, 1975), 76-8.

<sup>457</sup> 'The yew is a tree with rough bark/hard and firm in the earth, a keeper of flame,/well-supported by its roots,/a pleasure to have on one's land', translation by Maureen Halsall, *The Old English Rune Poem: A Critical Edition* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1981), 88-9. Aldhelmus Scireburnensis, *Ænigmata*, 133, Enigma: 69, Verse: 1.

<sup>458</sup> Della Hooke, *Trees in Anglo-Saxon England: Literature, Lore and Landscape* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2010), 208.

By the twelfth century, yew trees were specifically tied to ecclesiastical spaces. Gerald of Wales' *Topographia Hibernica*, written around 1188, notes that the number of yew trees in Ireland was by far the most he had ever seen and were specifically tied to ecclesiastical locations, 'Prae terris autem omnibus quas intravimus, longe copiosius amaro hic succo taxus abundat; maxime vero in coemiteriis antiquis, locisque sacris, sanctorum virorum manibus olim plantatas, ad decorem et ornatum quem addere poterant, arborum istarum copiam videas'.<sup>459</sup> Yew trees were also said to be planted by early medieval saints, 'Qui et statim in fraxinos, et taxos, arboresque varias, quas nobilis abbas Chenachus, aliique viri sancti, quorum frequens religio locum illustraverat, propriis manibus quasi ad ornatum ecclesiae circa coemeterium olim plantaverant, enormiter et irrevenenter desaecire coeperunt'.<sup>460</sup> While yew trees and their wood are connected to holy persons and sacred objects, yew trees themselves were likely used as an available resource.

In addition to the potential symbolic meaning, the abundance of yew trees in medieval Ireland further suggests that the yew tree was possibly chosen due to accessibility and ease, both as a nearby resource in Ireland and for the wood's known properties as flexible and enduring due to the wood's acidity. As Delahunty notes in their study on the yew tree, it 'has been used as a material for indoor and outdoor

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<sup>459</sup> 'Yews, with their bitter sap, are more frequently to be found in this country than in any other I have visited; but you will see them principally in old cemeteries and sacred places, where they were planted in ancient times by the hands of holy men, to give them what ornament and beauty they could', translation in *The Historical Works Containing the Topography of Ireland, and the History of the Conquest of Ireland*, trans. T. Forester (London: George Bell & Sons, 1863), 125. Giraldus Cambrensis, 'Topographia Hibernica', in *Giraldi Cambrensis Opera*, ed. J. S. Brewer, James F. Dimock, and George F. Warner (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 152.

<sup>460</sup> 'The illustrious abbot Kenach and other holy men in succession, through whose fervent piety the place became celebrated, had formerly planted with their own hands ash trees and yews, and various other kinds of trees, round the cemetery for the ornament of the church', translation in *The Historical Works Containing the Topography of Ireland, and the History of the Conquest of Ireland*, 100. 'Topographia Hibernica', 135.

utensils for perhaps hundreds of thousands of years'.<sup>461</sup> Further evidence for the prevalence of yew trees can also be found by examining yew-tree derived place-names in the Irish annals.<sup>462</sup>

A similar interpretation is also likely for the oak-cored Moissac shrine and beech-cored Mortain shrine. As Webster reports, the 'Irish-Scot' shrines 'differ from the newly discovered [Moissac] chrismatory in that they are mostly made of yew, not oak, and the proportions of the latter are steeper and slenderer, closer to some of the continental purse-shaped reliquaries, so called due to their purse-like form'.<sup>463</sup>

Indeed, in cases where the wooden cores of Continental purse-shaped shrines have been tested, oak, beech, and limewood are more common while yew is absent.<sup>464</sup>

Still, there exists the possibility that the wooden cores of the Moissac and Mortain shrines could further link them to England or northeastern Europe. Della Hooke observes that the place names that use beech trees are restricted in distribution, and are mostly found in southern England in places such as Kent, Sussex, Surrey, Hampshire, and Worcestershire.<sup>465</sup> However, this distribution is complicated due to the similarity between bēce (beech-tree), bece (a stream, valley), and bæc (a back).<sup>466</sup> While the beech had a limited reach in England, European beech was more widespread in northeastern Europe.<sup>467</sup> Scholars such as Mary Forrest, Cecil Konijnendijk, and Thomas Ludemann note that while the ecology and forest systems of Europe have shifted over the millennia, within the period of 0–1000 CE there was

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<sup>461</sup> J. L. Delahunty, 'Religion, War, and Changing Landscapes: An Historical and Ecological Account of the Yew Tree (*Taxus Baccata* L.) in Ireland' (Phd diss., University of Florida, 2002), 23.

<sup>462</sup> 'Yew Tree Toponyms', 3.

<sup>463</sup> Webster, 'Anglo-Carolingian Chrismatory', 71.

<sup>464</sup> Quast, *Reliquienkästchen aus Ennabeuren*, 7-11; Webster, *Anglo-Saxon Art: A New History*, 205.

<sup>465</sup> Hooke, *Trees in Anglo-Saxon England*, 33-6.

<sup>466</sup> Ibid.

<sup>467</sup> Andreas Bolte, Tomasz Czajkowski, and Thomas Kompa, 'The North-Eastern Distribution Range of European Beech—A Review', *Forestry* 80, no. 4 (2007): 413-7.

a greater density of yew trees in Ireland, compared to the beech- and oak-rich forests of England and Continental Europe.<sup>468</sup>

While the wooden cores of the Moissac and Mortain shrines were essentially carved in the same manner as the other Irish or Scottish shrines, the differences in the wood used in their construction could point to different areas of manufacture. Recently our ability to identify materials through visual inspection even when aided with a microscope has been called into question.<sup>469</sup> While yew, beech, and oak could be used to point to firmer provenances, ultimately, until further testing occurs, little more can be said. Still, it can be noted that yew's unpredictable grain pattern, density, and even drying pattern make it ideal for small objects, such as Insular house-shaped shrines; beech's grain density makes it a good wood for objects designed for heavy wear; and oak, while slightly denser than yew on average, is well-suited for objects without highly detailed carvings.

However, the genus is not the only significant aspects of these wooden cores, as the interplay between material and its employment is important to consider. As discussed in the previous chapter, these wooden cores were carved from single blocks of wood, each shaped into two parts: a lid and box. Notably, the bowl-like cavity created secures the contents of the shrine from spilling out. The potential for loss or defilement of sacral matter was a great concern and was recorded in Insular penitentials such as the *Paenitentiale Pseudo-Theodori*, 'Qui creaturam perdiderit,

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<sup>468</sup> Mary Forrest and Cecil Konijnendijk, 'A History of Urban Forests and Trees in Europe', in *Urban Forests and Trees: A Reference Book*, ed. Cecil Konijnendijk, et al. (Berlin, Heidelberg: Springer Berlin Heidelberg, 2005), 24-8; Thomas Ludemann, 'Past Fuel Wood Exploitation and Natural Forest Vegetation in the Black Forest, the Vosges and Neighbouring Regions in Western Central Europe', *Palaeogeography, Palaeoclimatology, Palaeoecology* 291, no. 1-2 (2010): 161-4.

<sup>469</sup> Recent testing of pigments has challenged previous classifications derived from visual analysis. See, Cheryl A. Porter, 'You Can't Tell a Pigment by its Color', in *Making the Medieval Book: Techniques of Production*, ed. Linda Brownrigg (London: Anderson-Lovelace, 1995), 111-16.

hoc est thus, tabulas aut scedulam vel sal benedictum aut panem novum consecratum vel aliquid huic simile, vii dies peniteat'.<sup>470</sup> The *Paenitentiale Cummeani*, *Penitentialis Vinniani*, and the *Paenitentiale Ecgberhti* have similar injunctions against losing consecrated objects (*creaturam*) or blessing(s) of God (*benedictionem Dei*) and prescribed the same length of penance.<sup>471</sup> With these penitentials in mind, the use of wooden cores may have been motivated by concern over protecting sacral matter, as approximately 72% of the shrines were constructed with wooden cores.

## Metal

While wood was used in the construction of most Insular house-shaped shrines, metalwork of some variety was used on every shrine. Copper alloy, the most prolific material in the group, was used for decorative panels and mounts, hinges, tubular and semi-tubular frames, locking pins, ridgepoles, and suspension fittings. The specific metals and alloys discussed below have all been confirmed by laboratory testing, including XRF scanning. Taking the Melhus shrine as an example, by examining the metalwork under XRF spectrometry we can discern the overall atomic elements present, which in this case consist of iron, copper, zinc, lead, tin, phosphorus, and silicon. As XRF spectrometry cannot penetrate the surface of the metal, multiple readings are taken from several locations to give a more holistic view of the metalwork's composition. While iron, lead, phosphorus, and silicon are

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<sup>470</sup> 'He who loses a consecrated object, that is incense, a tablet, document, blessed salt, newly consecrated bread, or something similar, seven days penance.' *Paenitentiale Pseudo-Theodori*, 156B, Chapter: 34, Canon: 2, Page: 94, Line: 5.

<sup>471</sup> *Irish Penitentials*, *Paenitentiale Cummeani*, Page: 124; *Penitentialis Vinniani*, Page: 92. Egbertus Eboracensis, *Sancti Egberti Eboracensis Archiepiscopi Canones*, 89, Col.0451D.

typically low in the overall composition, copper, zinc, and tin feature more prominently, with tin appearing in relatively high amounts, upwards of 50%, suggesting the surface of the Melhus shrine would have appeared similar to the tinned Setnes shrine.<sup>472</sup>

Copper alloys were used to construct the following:

**Decorative Mounts:** Amiata, Bobbio, Bologna, Clonard, Emly, Lough Erne (A), Melhus, Monymusk, Mortain, Ranvaik, Setnes, Shannon

**Frames and Mouldings:** Amiata, Bologna, Emly, Lough Erne (A), Melhus, Monymusk, Ranvaik, Setnes, Shannon

**Hinges:** Amiata, Bobbio, Bologna, Clonmore, Lough Erne (A-B), Melhus, Moissac, Monymusk, Mortain, Ranvaik, Setnes, Shannon

**Locking Pins:** Clonmore, Melhus, Setnes

**Ridgepoles and Finials:** Amiata, Bologna, Emly, Lough Erne (A), Melhus, Moissac, Mortain, Monymusk, Ranvaik, the three ridgepole fragments from the Ulster Museum, the two ridgepoles from the National Museum of Ireland, and the ridgepole from the National Museum of Scotland

**Solid Panels:** Bobbio, Bologna, Brussels, Clonard, Clonmore, Hokksund, Lough Erne (A-B), Melhus, Moissac, Monymusk, Mortain, Ranvaik, Setnes, Shannon

**Suspension Fittings:** Amiata, Bobbio, Bologna, Clonard, Emly, Hokksund, Lough Erne (A-B), Melhus, Monymusk, Mortain, Ranvaik

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<sup>472</sup> I would like to thank Jon Anders Risvaag of the NTNU Vitenskapsmuseet for retesting the Melhus shrine.

From the above, we can see the prevalence of copper alloy both as a structural material and in more decorative modes, which is not uncommon for Insular or Continental shrines and other forms of ecclesiastical metalwork.<sup>473</sup>

Turning to the next material, tinned lead is found on only two shrines:

**Tinned Lead:** Amiata, Emly

As discussed in the previous chapter, these two shrines also feature copper-alloy tubular frameworks, despite there being no structural reason for their inclusion besides to further the illusion that the shrines' faces are covered by flat panels. In both of these case, the interplay of light as it falls across the surfaces of the shrines causes the dark wood to appear like niello.

Much like the wooden cores of some Insular house-shaped shrines, the copper-alloy panels and ornaments utilised were not always visible. While copper-alloy panels are present on fifteen shrines, tinning is used to cover the surfaces of the shrines:

**Tinned Copper Panels:** Bobbio, Bologna, Brussels, Clonard, Clonmore, Lough Erne (A-B), Melhus, Ranvaik, and Setnes shrines

In contrast to this broad application of tinning, gilding appears minimally and survives less often:

**Gilt Escutcheons:** Amiata, Bologna, Lough Erne (A), Monymusk, Shannon

**Gilt Frames:** Amiata, Bologna, Emly, Lough Erne (A), Monymusk, Shannon

**Gilt Panels:** Bologna, Moissac, Mortain

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<sup>473</sup> Paul T. Craddock, Jonathan M. Wallis, and John F. Merkel, 'The Rapid Qualitative Analysis of Groups of Metalwork: Making a Dream Come True', in *Pattern and Purpose in Insular Art*, ed. Mark Redknap, et al. (Oxford: Oxbow, 2001), 122.



**Gilt Ridgepoles:** Bologna, Emly, Lough Erne (A), Monymusk, the fragmented middle portion of a ridge from the National Museum of Ireland, the National Museum of Scotland ridgepole

While gilding completely covers the panels of the Moissac and Mortain shrines, the Bologna shrine's- back panels are tinned. There is no instance of cast gold on the shrines, although gilding does appear on the frames, ridgepoles, and mounts of the Amiata, Bologna, Emly, Lough Erne (A), Monymusk, and Shannon shrines. Furthermore, small sections of gilding also survive on ridgepole fragments. In comparison, plain copper-alloy panels, neither tinned or gilt, are found only on the Monymusk, Ranvaik, and Shannon shrines. Overall, tinning is found on nine shrines while gilding appears on seven, and in each case, the surface metal augments the visibility of the copper-alloy substrate.

Finally, unlike gold, silver was used to construct shrine panels and frames:

**Silver Frame:** Moissac

**Silver Panels:** London, Monymusk, Shannon

Laboratory analysis by the British Museum has confirmed that the niello found on the London panels was only composed of silver sulphide, placing the panels sometime before the introduction of mixed sulphide niello in the eleventh century.<sup>474</sup> Within the context of Insular house-shaped shrines, by weight there is much more actual silver than gold; however, all surviving shrines with no lost panels or frames, save the Mortain shrine, utilise both gold and silver tones in their application and augmentation of metalwork.

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<sup>474</sup> Wilson, 'Anglo-Saxon Casket', 50.

As we can see from the above, while there is overlap in materials used, some patterns can be discerned. The construction and application of tinned lead on both the Amiata and Emly shrines might suggest the shrines are more connected than their provenances imply.<sup>475</sup> Next, the silver panels of the London, Monymusk, and Shannon shrines mark them as particularly precious. Following this, the application of gilding versus tinning appears to follow the provenances of the shrines: those shrines with strong alleged Irish or Scottish ornament feature more tinning in comparison to the extensive application of gilding seen on the Anglo-Saxon Moissac and Mortain shrines.

Both the process of gilding and tinning the copper-alloy panels would have dramatically transformed the surfaces of the shrines, which may have altered how they were perceived and received by various audiences. Similar issues are explored by Joseph Ackley, who focuses on eleventh-century literature and artefacts and examines the visual dilemma caused by covering copper-alloy substrates with other metals. At the core of Ackley's examination of copper-alloy substrates in medieval treasury objects is the question: would medieval audiences see the object as copper alloy, gold, silver, or a combination of the above? Citing both Theophilus's *De diversis artibus* and Michael Camille's 'tiered model of medieval literacy', Ackley discusses the social and economic importance of being able to read the materials of sumptuous objects. As costly artefacts could be used to pay debts, as seen in late-Roman and medieval hoards such as that of Traprain Law, knowledge of the construction and materials of these objects was incredibly important to medieval

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<sup>475</sup> For the discussion on the provenances of Insular house-shaped shrines, see chapter two.

cataloguers.<sup>476</sup> However, the objects were sometimes perceived as being more precious than they were.

Illustrating the challenge medieval cataloguers faced, Ackley uses two key points in treasury inventories of Kremusmünster abbey from shortly after 1013. Ackley notes the gilt thuribles were listed as ‘turribulum aureum, alterum eneam et deauratum’, while the gilt and silvered Tassilo chalice was listed more ambiguously, implying that the author was not sure if the chalice was silver or gold.<sup>477</sup> In this case, the mercury gilding of the chalice potentially hid its copper-alloy substrate. While not every gilt object would have performed as successfully as the Tassilo chalice [Figure 81], at times some gilt objects were apparently read as being constructed from more precious materials.<sup>478</sup> In like manner, tinning, in which a thin layer of tin is added to the surface of a substrate, produces a silver-like effect. When writing on the Emly shrine in 1954, Swarzenski refers to the tinned-lead bars that decorate the shrine as silver, not as a composite material, illustrating a contemporary instance of a covered substrate performing as a more precious material.<sup>479</sup>

Keeping Ackley’s research in mind, it is thus possible that some descriptions of objects in early medieval sources, especially those that were not catalogues, may have been more figurative, rather than acting as meticulous records of actual materials. As discussed in chapter one, shrines are mentioned both in the *Annals of Ulster* and the *Annals of the Four Masters* but are only recorded as being made from

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<sup>476</sup> Märit Gaimster, ‘Viking Economies: Evidence from the Silver Hoards’, in *Silver Economy in the Viking Age*, ed. James Graham-Campbell and Gareth Williams (Walnut Creek: Left Coast Press, 2007), 126-7.

<sup>477</sup> Joseph Ackley, ‘Copper-Alloy Substrates in Precious-Metal Treasury Objects: Concealed and Yet Excessive’, *Different Visions* 4 (2014): 20.

<sup>478</sup> For more on gilt metal being perceived as more precious see David Hinton, Suzanne Keene, and Kenneth Qualmann, ‘The Winchester Reliquary’, *Medieval Archaeology* 25 (1981): 45-77.

<sup>479</sup> Swarzenski, ‘Anglo-Irish Potable Shrine’, 51.

silver and gold. As only a few house-shaped shrines were constructed with silver and the only gold found on the shrines was from gilding, these annals may reflect the reading of tin and gilding as silver and gold—or they may reflect Patristic and Insular exegetical and hagiographic engagements with the symbolic meaning of metalwork.

Studies on the allegory of precious materials, their hierarchy, and economic weight in the early medieval period are extensive.<sup>480</sup> Dominic Janes, drawing on works by Pliny, Bede, Gregory the Great, Caesarius of Arles, Isidore of Seville, and others, examines allegorical discussions of gold in late-antique and early medieval literature and mosaics. Repeatedly, Janes emphasises patterns found in medieval exegesis: gold was rare and connected to the ‘treasure culture’ of late antiquity, while it also symbolised both holiness and tests of virtue, explained through metallurgical metaphors.<sup>481</sup> Similarly, the academic literature surrounding reliquaries has also examined ways that precious materials signalled the more subtle holiness of relics, which would otherwise appear as fragments of bone, wax, earth, and cloth.<sup>482</sup> Interestingly, silver was associated with the shrines of saints and liturgical tools within fifth- to eighth-century Byzantine and Roman hagiography and papal records,

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<sup>480</sup> For more on these topics see, Henry Maguire, 'Magic and Money in the Early Middle Ages', *Speculum* 72 (1997): 1037-54; Victor H. Elbern, 'Altar Implements and Liturgical Objects', in *Age of Spirituality: Late Antique and Early Christian Art, Third to Seventh Century*, ed. Kurt Weitzmann (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1979), 592-98; Michael Pinder, 'An Aspect of Seventh-Century Anglo-Saxon Goldsmithing', in *Pattern and Purpose in Insular Art* ed. Mark Redknapp, et al. (Oxford: Oxbow, 2001), 133-9; Ryan, 'Metalwork in Ireland from the Later Seventh', 43-58; López, 'Symbolic Life and Signs of Identity', 424-6.

<sup>481</sup> Dominic Janes, *Gold and God in Late Antiquity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 61-93.

<sup>482</sup> For more on the use of such associative relics see, Barbara Drake Boehm, 'Body-Part Reliquaries: The State of Research', *Gesta* 36 (1997): 8-19; Galit Noga-Banai, *The Trophies of the Martyrs: An Early Historical Study of Early Christian Reliquaries* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008); Martina Bagnoli, 'The Stuff of Heaven: Materials and Craftmanship in Medieval Reliquaries', in *Treasures of Heaven: Saints, Relics, and Devotion in Medieval Europe*, ed. Martina Bagnoli, et al. (London: British Museum, 2011), 137-47; Hahn, *Strange Beauty*.

as Ruth Leader-Newby notes in her work on *Miracles of St Demestrius*, a seventh-century text written in Greek, St Demestrius's tomb was covered in silver and fitted with a silver ciborium.<sup>483</sup>

The *Liber Pontificalis* further records two scenes in which Pelagius II donates silver for the tomb of St Laurence, 'Hic fecit supra corpus beati Laurentii martyris basilicam a fundamento constructam, et tabulis argenteis exornavit sepulcrum eius', while Honorius is described donating silver to St Agnes, 'Ornavit autem sepulcrum eius ex argento, quod pensan. libras 252. Posuit et desuper ciborium aereum deauratum mirae magnitudinis'.<sup>484</sup> Indeed, throughout the early *Liber Pontificalis*, gold, silver, and bronze are mentioned in relation to the extensive church decorations of Sylvester I, in relation to the liturgical tools in the donations of Hormisdas, and in relation to the tombs of saints, which are specifically decorated with silver panels, as seen with Hilarius's donation at the tomb of St Pancras.<sup>485</sup> Despite being concerned with churches outside of the British Isles, the *Liber Pontificalis* documents what the pinnacle of Western Christian ecclesiastical art may entail; it also records how materials can be explicitly catalogued and their weight recorded, thus offering a more objective record of material and wealth that engages with materiality through subtler means than more metaphorical engagements do.

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<sup>483</sup> Ruth Leader-Newby, *Silver and Society in Late Antiquity: Functions and Meanings of Silver Plate in the Fourth to Seventh Centuries* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004), 71.

<sup>484</sup> 'Over the body of St Laurence he built a basilica from the ground up and decorated the martyr's tomb with silver panels.' and 'He also decorated her tomb with silver weighing 252 lb; over it he placed a bronze-gilt canopy of marvellous size', translation in *The Book of the Pontiffs (Liber Pontificalis) The Ancient Biographies of First Ninety Roman Bishops to A.D. 715*, trans. Raymond Davis, 3rd ed. (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2010), 59, 62-3, 21; *De vitis Romanorum pontificum continuatio*, ed. J. P. Migne, vol. 128, Patrologia Latina (Paris: Garnier et Migne, 1852), Col. 0637, Col.99.

<sup>485</sup> *De vitis Romanorum pontificum*, ed. J. P. Migne, vol. 127, Patrologia Latina (Paris: Garnier et Migne, 1853), Col. 1515; *De vitis Romanorum pontificum continuatio*, 128, Col.0473, Col.699.

While influenced by availability and economic pressures, the hierarchy of precious metals in medieval literature was based both on cultural tradition and Biblical precedent. Isaiah 60:17 lists the preciousness of different metals in a series of either/or relationships, ‘pro aere adferam aurum et pro ferro ad feram argentum et pro lignis aes et pro lapidibus ferrum’.<sup>486</sup> While gold and silver are generally straightforward terms, Otto Werner has shown that, technically, objects traditionally referred to as bronze are in fact brass.<sup>487</sup> Ackley further notes that the three major Latin terms for copper or copper alloys, *aes*, *aurichalcum*, and *caprum*, caused some conflation between them due to their ‘practical and semantic’ relationships.<sup>488</sup> Indeed, Jerome’s *Commentarii in Ezechielem* speaks on the term used to describe the heavens, ‘*caelum aeneum*’, which is much like *electrum*.<sup>489</sup> Moreover, liturgical objects constructed from copper alloy, silver, and gold appear throughout the Vulgate; this suggests a more generalised understanding of precious metals as markers of purity and holiness, as seen in Joshua 6:19, ‘quicquid autem auri et argenti et vasorum aeneorum ac ferri Domino consecratur repositum in thesauris eius’, while Jerimiah 52: 17–22 described the brass (*aereas*) pillars, capitals, statues, and the Sea of Brass of Solomon’s Temple.<sup>490</sup> In the wider context of early medieval Christian art and especially ecclesiastical art, the use of copper alloy, silver, and gold within the group of Insular house-shaped shrines appears quite typical. However,

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<sup>486</sup> ‘Instead of bronze, I will bring gold, and instead of iron I will bring silver, and instead of wood, brass, and instead of stones, iron’, Hieronymus, *Biblia sacra iuxta vulgatam versionem*, ed. B. Fischer, et al. (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1975), Chapter: 60, Verse: 17.

<sup>487</sup> Otto Werner, ‘Analysen mittelalterlicher Bronzen und Messinge I’, *Archäologie und Naturwissenschaften* 1 (1977): 166-7.

<sup>488</sup> Ackley, ‘Copper-Alloy Substrates’, 10.

<sup>489</sup> Hieronymus, *Commentarii in Ezechielem* ed. F. Glorie, vol. 75, Corpus Christianorum Series Latina (Turnhout: Brepols Publishers, 1964), Book: 7, Chapter: 22, Line: 653.

<sup>490</sup> ‘Moreover, whatever is of gold and silver, and vessels of brass and also iron, are consecrated to God and deposited in his treasury’, *Biblia sacra iuxta Vulgatam versionem*, Chapter: 6, Verse: 19.

there are notable Insular textual sources which grant further insight into the extensive use of tinning beyond its ability to replicate the appearance of silver or its more pragmatic function as a protection against weathering.

In one Insular example of the hierarchy of precious materials, the ninth-century Irish hagiographic narrative *Vita sancti Lasriani*, St Columba explains the appearance of gold, silver, and glass as seen in a dream vision,

Beatus Baythinus quadam nocte dormiens, vidit visionem mirificam, cuius misterium per se intelligere non potuit, De sompno igitur evigilans, beato Columbe eam interpretandam indicavit, dicens: ‘Vidi enim tres cathedras nimio splendore fulgentes, et miro fulgore micantes; quarum una erat aurea, altera argentea, et tertia vitrea.’ Beatus vero Columba, cum esset quasi alter Daniel in interpretacione sompniorum, sic ait: ‘Cathedra,’ inquit, ‘aurea, quam vidisti, est Kerani filii artificis, qui caritatis fervore et fulgenti colore tanquam aurum in colore et valore omnes precellit suos coetaneos. Cathedra vero argentea, quam vidisti, ipsa debetur sancto Lasriano, qui eloquentie et sapientie nitore micat pre ceteris. Tercia vero cathedra, silicet vitrea, quam vidisti, mihi a Domino meo donabitur, quia natura sum fragilis, et camalium amicorum et propinquorum amore frequenter occupatus. Quanto enim plus inferiora diligimus, tanto superiora et celestia minus diligimus.’<sup>491</sup>

Baythinus here sees three ceremonial chairs of gold, silver, and glass, which Columba relates to Keverne, Lasrian, and himself, each in descending order of both material and spiritual worth; indeed, the Latin *cathedra* is related to the office, seat, and title of bishop and the bishop’s area of jurisdiction, which may have carried further architectural connotations. It is noteworthy that glass is included in this hierarchy of precious materials, which in turn mirrors other more Continental traditions of placing gold and silver at the top. Indeed, gold’s primacy can quite

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<sup>491</sup> ‘Blessed Baythinus, sleeping a certain night, saw a wonderful vision, whose mystery he himself could not understand, then waking up from the dream, he told St Columba, explaining it, saying, ‘I saw three chairs glistening with excessive brilliance, and I marvel at the shining splendour. Of these, one was gold, another silver, and the third glass. The Blessed true Columba, who was like another Daniel in interpretation of dreams, said thus, ‘The gold chair,’ he said, ‘which you saw is St Keverne the son of the artist, who with the ardour of charity shining like gold in colour, in colour and valour he surpasses all his contemporaries. Truly the silver chair, which you saw, that I thought to be Lasrian, who with eloquence and wisdom shines above the others. Truly the third chair, of glass, which you saw, was given to me from the Lord, since I am frail by nature, since I am often occupied with the carnal love of friends and relatives. Because how much we love the more inferior, with so much less we love the superior and heavenly’, ‘*Vita sancti Lasriani*’ *Vitae Sanctorum Hiberniae*, vol. 2, 139.

literally be heaven-sent as seen in the Irish tenth-century *Vita sancti Cainnici*, when St Brendan comes to St Cainnicus in the hopes that he would have enough gold to help him to make a chalice (*calicem aureum*). Unfortunately, the saint cannot provide the gold St Brendan needs. However, during a meal between the two holy men, God intervenes and transforms their bread into gold,

Deus autem omnipotens duobus sanctis suis misertus est. Nam sanctus Cainnicus comedens cum sancto Brendano, benedixit panem, et ponens super mensam, totus ipse panis aurum optimum et purum factus est. Videntes sancti hoc, gratias Deo egerunt; et sanctus Brendanus totum illud aurum secum portavit, et de illo auro totus calix factus est, qui usque hodie 'in monasterio' sancti Brendani manet.<sup>492</sup>

In this instance, gold, the most precious of materials, is given directly by God and used in the creation of liturgical objects.

Scholars have examined the availability of sources for silver, gold, and copper in the Insular sphere, and new insights are still being produced.<sup>493</sup> While silver may have been more available in the pre-Viking period in Ireland than was previously thought, silver artefacts from the seventh to ninth centuries, such as the Derrynaflan Chalice [Figure 82], were often constructed with a high copper content.<sup>494</sup> One could also include Pictish silver in this discussion, as the silver bowls of the St Ninian's Isle hoard were also constructed with a high amount of copper [Figure 83].<sup>495</sup> Speaking on the availability of materials, Ryan notes that 'wealth in

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<sup>492</sup> 'Almighty God had mercy on his two saints. For while St. Cainnicus was eating with St. Brendan, he blessed the bread, and put it on top of the table, and all of that bread was made of finest gold. Seeing this the saints gave thanks to God; and St Brendan carried all that gold with him, and from that gold had a chalice made, which to this day remains in the monastery of St Brendan', 'Vita sancti Cainnici' *ibid.*, 1: 168.

<sup>493</sup> George Henderson and Isabel Henderson, *The Art of the Picts: Sculpture and Metalwork in Early Medieval Scotland* (London: Thames & Hudson Ltd., 2004), 87-121; Fiona Gavin and Conor Newman, 'Notes on Insular Silver in the 'Military Style'', *The Journal of Irish Archaeology* 16 (2007): 1-10.

<sup>494</sup> Ryan, 'Metalwork in Ireland from the Later Seventh', 50-8; 'Some Archaeological Comments on the Occurrence and Use of Silver in Pre-Viking Ireland', in *Studies on Early Ireland*, ed. B. Scott (Belfast: Association of Young Irish Archaeologists, 1981), 45-50.

<sup>495</sup> Small, Thomas, and Wilson, *St. Ninian's Isle and Its Treasure*, vol. 2.



the form of silver and gold was not freely available...[and w]hile there are literary references to silver as used in transactions of many kinds, it was likely that the circulation of the metal was restricted to the few'.<sup>496</sup> Fergus Kelly has also observed that silver is cited far more often in law texts than gold, and while the weights of payments are listed, this was done in reference to a crafted object, e.g. "a precious brooch worth an ounce of silver" rather than "a precious brooch weighing an ounce".<sup>497</sup> Likewise, speaking on Anglo-Saxon goldsmiths, Elizabeth Coatsworth and Michael Pinder have discussed that precious materials rarely came from local mining, but rather came through a complex system of trade, exchange, plundering, inheritance, tribute, and taxation.<sup>498</sup> Janet Backhouse, D. H. Turner, and Leslie Webster have discussed how the amount of gold available for metalwork appeared to decline during the same period that saw the debasement of the gold coin in Western Europe.<sup>499</sup> According to Mark Blackburn, this could be a reason behind the 'significant shift' from gold objects to silver, copper, and tinned objects.<sup>500</sup> The influx of silver into England during the Viking Age further influenced this shift, although J. P. Mallory also suggests the Vikings' re-use and removal of native and Roman silver objects may have caused the paucity of silver in the pre-Viking Irish archaeological record.<sup>501</sup> While the Shannon and Monymusk shrines' silver may have come from any number of sources, the London plates' date and style point to

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<sup>496</sup> Ryan, 'Metalwork in Ireland from the Later Seventh', 45.

<sup>497</sup> Fergus Kelly, *A Guide to Early Irish Law* (Dublin: Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies, 1995), 114.

<sup>498</sup> Elizabeth Coatsworth and Michael Pinder, *The Art of the Anglo-Saxon Goldsmith* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2002), 1-17.

<sup>499</sup> Webster, Backhouse, and Turner, *Golden Age of Anglo-Saxon Art*, 220-1.

<sup>500</sup> Blackburn, 'Gold in England', 74.

<sup>501</sup> J. P. Mallory, 'Silver in the Ulster Cycle Tales', in *Proceedings of the Seventh International Congress of Celtic Studies*, ed. D. Ellis Evans, John G. Griffith, and E. M. Jope (Oxford: D. Ellis Evans, 1986), 59.

hybrid Anglo-Saxon and Viking roots, implying that the silver may have come from Viking sources.<sup>502</sup>

In acknowledging the limited circulation of silver and gold ingots within the primary period of Insular house-shaped shrines, that is the seventh to the tenth centuries, it is tempting to consider the tinning of copper-alloy panels as reflecting either a desire to emulate silver or as simply to safeguard the shrines from corrosion. However, the Irish term *findruine*, meaning ‘white metal’, could suggest that Irish audiences saw tinned copper as a type of precious material, located within more native hierarchies of prized metals. Indeed, objects constructed of *findruine* demonstrate their preciousness as seen in a passage from the eighth-century *Fled Bricrenn*, a tale from the Ulster Cycle.<sup>503</sup> The scene concerns an argument over the choicest portion of a meal reserved for the champion, which is resolved over a series of gifts presented in ascending order. While Cú Chulainn eventually wins the ‘Champion’s Portion’ with his cup of red gold (*n-dercóir*) set with dragon-stones (*sula do dracoin*), it is the exchange between Lóegaire Budach and Conall Cernach that I wish to draw attention to. The passage reads,

Atsraig Loegaire Buadach la sodain ocus túargaib in cuach creduma ocus én airgit for a lár. “Is lim-sa cauradmír” for se “ocus ní hinund comartha tucsam lind.” Cuach creduma tucaisiu, cuach findruini immorro thucusa. Is réil asinded fil etorro, conid lim-sa in caurathmír.<sup>504</sup>

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<sup>502</sup> Webster, *Anglo-Saxon Art: A New History*, 218-9.

<sup>503</sup> G. Mac Eoin, ‘The Dating of Middle Irish Texts’, *Proceedings of the British Academy* 68 (1982): 109–37.

<sup>504</sup> ‘Then Lóegaire Budach got up and lifted on high the bronze cup having the silver bird [chased] on the bottom. ‘The Champion’s Portion is mine,’ he said, ‘and none may contest it with me.’ ‘It is not,’ Conall Cernach said, ‘Not alike are the tokens we brought off with us. Yours is a cup of bronze, whereas mine is a cup of white metal [findruini]. From the difference between them the Champion’s Portion clearly belongs to me’, translation in *The Celtic Heroic Age*, ed. John T. Koch and John Carey (Andover: Celtic Studies Publication, 1995), 87; *Fled Bricredd*, ed. George Henderson (London: The Irish Texts Society, 1899), 92-4.

Scholars such as Mallory have examined how materials and items are discussed in the Ulster Cycle tales, which are pieces of Irish mythology concerning the events of the first century CE in Ireland containing elements of writing from the seventh century to the twelfth century. As Elva Johnston notes, while the Ulster Cycle was a nonreligious work, it would have been an important part of Irish literary history for medieval scribes and monks.<sup>505</sup> Returning to the question of tinning and its social functions, Mallory found that gold was often awarded the highest honour, being used to describe the regalia of Irish figures, also appearing as red gold (*dreg-ór*) and in phrases pairing silver with gold. However, while other sources such as Aldhelm's *De Virginitate* list the hierarchy of metals as gold, silver and bronze, which Aldhelm uses to describe virginity, chastity, and conjugal marriages respectively, iron (*íarn*), red gold (*dreg-ór*), steel (*cruaid*), and *findruine* also appear in Irish literary sources, usually in ascending order, deviating from the trope of three descending materials.<sup>506</sup>

Research by Niamh Whitefield, Mallory, and M. A. O'Brien on *findruine* suggests that the term may have referred to tinned copper alloy.<sup>507</sup> Mallory argues that the composition of *findruine* was likely not a gold–silver alloy, as it ranks slightly lower than silver. As *electrum* was an alloy of both gold and silver, two of the most precious materials, the placement of *findruine* below silver alloys implies that it was formed from other materials.<sup>508</sup> Regarding the significance of bronze (*crédumae*, *umae*, *créda*) in the Irish literature, Mallory found that, while precious,

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<sup>505</sup> Elva Johnston, *Literacy and Identity in Early Medieval Ireland* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2013), 16-23.

<sup>506</sup> Mallory, 'Silver in the Ulster Cycle', 32.

<sup>507</sup> Ibid.

<sup>508</sup> Ibid., 57-8.

the material was often placed last in hierarchies of metals, mirroring early medieval Western sources from the Continent.<sup>509</sup> To explain this discrepancy, Whitefield suggests that *findruine* may, in fact, refer to ‘tinning using a head “stick” or by dipping [the object] in molten tin’.<sup>510</sup> While the tinned metal of house-shaped shrines may have been read as silver at times, *findruine* offers another term to consider for this tinned metal. Furthermore, the term does not render Insular house-shaped shrines any less precious, as *findruine* is itself a precious metal ranked above bronze, and its relationship with silver suggests they may have shared similar cultural and potentially symbolic markers. At the very least, both metals were capable of reflecting light from a distance. This choice to cover the shrines, especially their faces, with a highly reflective material suggests that these portable containers were constructed with movement and visual performance in mind.

Within the Irish hagiographic sources, one instance of *findruine* appears in the ninth-century *Vita tripartita sancti Patricii*, where it describes a portable container that St Patrick tells fellow pilgrims in Rome about,

Ambaí Patrice forest inocásenám Romae oc tuidecht úadi, ar do chóid fotri doRoim iarmbith ic foglaim isintír, cocomarnie dri seisuir mac clerech, agus se gillai léu, agus allibair ina criss dollotar díanailithri. “Isdinnim dodechas and,” olPatraic. “Dénid téig duib don crocundsa fil im coimitechtsa: ishé robai fomsuidisua agus fomtaeb inErind xxii. annis agus occoifriund.” “Ceist, agus intan seermait, coich uáin hí?” “Ní anse,” olPatraic, “nach congbaíl congabid tabraid far téig i talmain, agus dú dasugai isisinport bíeid,” quod impletum est. Is hísín in Breifnech Patraic iCluain Ernainn. Iscumtabarit cia crocann in rúon nó incethra. Immdernad iarom di ór agus findruine.<sup>511</sup>

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<sup>509</sup> Ibid.

<sup>510</sup> Niamh Whitfield, ‘Findruine—Tinned Bronze?’, in *A Grand Gallimaufry: Collected in Honour of Nick Maxwell*, ed. Mary Davies, Una MacConville, and Gabriel Cooney (Dublin: Wordwell Books, 2010), 95.

<sup>511</sup> ‘When Patrick was on the way journeying to Rome (or) coming from it for he went thrice to Rome after having been learning in the land, he met with six young clerics and six gillies with them, and their books in their girdles. They were going on their pilgrimage. ‘Weakly has one gone there,’ saith Patrick. ‘Make for you a wallet of this hide which is along with me. This hath been under my seat and under my side in Ireland for twenty years, and at mass.’ ‘Question’ (say they), ‘and when we shall separate, to which of us will it belong?’ ‘Not hard to say,’ saith Patrick: ‘at every (ecclesiastical)

The container itself is described as belonging to St Patrick and is specifically tied to the Mass and pilgrimage. The only other material that is listed with the container—hide—is not used in the construction of Insular house-shaped shrines; however, the leather was adorned with gold and *findruine*. In the absence of other Insular sources, it is noteworthy that St Patrick’s portable shrine is described as being covered in *findruine*, as the group of Insular house-shaped shrines is also composed of containers covered in white metal. Rather than try and ascribe one of the many religious interpretations of metalwork, which when interpreted positively typically expounds metal’s purification in furnaces, gold’s incorruptibility, and silver’s reflection of light, both earthly and heavenly, the metalwork of Insular house-shaped shrines more likely represents an Insular response to the availability of raw materials, augmented by the desire to clothe their shrines in some form of precious metalwork. Indeed, beyond the applicability of *findruine* as a fitting term for tinned copper alloy, the placement of silver or tinned panels on the faces of Insular house-shaped shrines signals a potential desire by their patrons to have them be of a portable size, but also highly visible, even at great distances.<sup>512</sup>

## Glass, Gems, and Enamelling

Before a discussion of the interplay between glass, gemstones, and enamelling is possible, it is first necessary to briefly review the distribution of these

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dwelling wherein ye set up, put your wallet into the earth, and the stead which swallows it up, in that place shall it abide.’ Which thing was fulfilled. This is the Breifnech Pdtraic in Cluain Ernainn. It is doubtful what hide (it was), whether a seal’s or a cow’s. It was then adorned with gold and white bronze’, translation in *The Tripartite Life of Patrick*, vol. 1, 74-5.

<sup>512</sup> For more on the size, ornament, and visibility of comparable artefacts, such as brooches, see ‘The Filigree of the Hunterston and ‘Tara’ Brooches’, in *The Age of Migrating Ideas*, ed. Michael R. Spearman and John Higgitt (Edinburgh: National Museums of Scotland, 1993), 118-27.

materials within the group of Insular house-shaped shrines. Beginning with glass, the Amiata, Bologna, Clonmore, Lough Erne (A), Melhus, and Monymusk shrines all have examples of surviving glass inserts. Unfortunately, of the eighteen shrines and shrine fragments, while eleven are fitted with mounts, not all their inserts survive, and any argument about them must be tempered with the knowledge of the limited sample size. Furthermore, the Amiata shrine has both red glass and garnets, so the presence of one surviving glass or gem insert does not preclude the presence of others, nor does this account for possible repairs to the shrines.<sup>513</sup>

Other than the red, white, clear, yellow and black *millefiori* on the suspension strap of the Melhus shrine and the plate of the Hokksund shrine, the surviving glass inserts of Insular house-shaped shrines are either blue or red and fall into three general categories. The first category of inserts is circular and level. The ridgepole of the Monymusk shrine has two surviving circular inserts of blue glass [Figure 14.A], while Ryan has described the three circular inserts of the Amiata shrine as red [Figure 20.A].<sup>514</sup> While round, the surviving glass inserts of the Clonmore shrine are also slightly raised; the form of these glass mounts is similar to the circular copper-alloy mounts of the Monymusk shrine, as both have a conical centre surrounded by a ringed border raised [Figure 84]. The next category consists of glass that is more cabochon or mound-like in shape: a small mound of blue glass decorates the lower hinge of a suspension strap on the Lough Erne (A) shrine [Figure 5.D] and the suspension strap of the Clonard shrine [Figure 3.B], while the red glass of the Bologna shrine, found on the shrine's face, is almost purple [Figure 23.A].<sup>515</sup>

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<sup>513</sup> Ryan, 'House-Shaped Shrine of Probable Irish Origin', 145.

<sup>514</sup> Ibid.

<sup>515</sup> Blindheim, 'A House-Shaped Irish-Scots Reliquary', 49-52.

Next, the number of shrines with surviving gemstones is significantly smaller; of those shrines, only three varieties of gemstones are present. The surviving mount of the Lough Erne (A) shrine holds a small mound of amber [Figure 5.A].<sup>516</sup> While technically a resin, amber was considered a type of gem or stone and was used to decorate a variety of Insular artefacts, such as the Hunterston brooch [Figure 85.A].<sup>517</sup> Isidore of Seville's *Etymologiae* is witness to this as well; in *De rubris gemmis*, Isidore explained that while amber is a resin, it is still used as a gem, a statement supported by countless examples of amber beadwork and inserts found on artefacts across Europe.<sup>518</sup> Similarly, coloured glass, as seen in the many examples from the St Ninian's Isle hoard, along with amber, garnet, and enamel was also used to decorate Insular brooches, much like house-shaped shrines.<sup>519</sup> Indeed, the second gemstone found on house-shaped shrines is the garnet. Backed by a thin layer of gold foil, two garnets were used to form the eyes of the beasts on the ridgepole of the Amiata shrine.<sup>520</sup> Finally, the third gemstone used on the shrines, rock crystal, only appears on the Bobbio shrine [Figure 22.C]. Two oblong horizontal openings on the face of the shrine would have provided the mounting necessary to hold the crystals, although only the bottom rock crystal survives.<sup>521</sup> Like the garnets of the Amiata shrine, a thin layer of metal, in this case, tinned copper alloy, was set behind the rock crystal. Rather than acting as a window in this instance, the rock crystal magnifies and reflects light back to the viewer.

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<sup>516</sup> *The Work of Angels*, 135-6.

<sup>517</sup> Robert B. K. Stevenson, 'The Hunterston Brooch and its Significance', *Medieval Archaeology* 18 (1974): 16.

<sup>518</sup> Zdenka Krumphanzlová, 'Amber: Its Significance in the Early Middle Ages', *Památky Archeologické* 83 (1992): 350-63; Isidorus Hispalensis, *Etymologiarum*, Book: 16, Chapter: 8, Paragraph: 6.

<sup>519</sup> Small, Thomas, and Wilson, *St. Ninian's Isle and Its Treasure*, vol. 2.

<sup>520</sup> Ryan, 'House-Shaped Shrine of Probable Irish Origin', 145.

<sup>521</sup> Bourke, 'Irish Reliquary in Bobbio', 289.

Lastly, enamelling was used on many of the shrines and can be found on the Bobbio, Bologna, Emly, Melhus, Monymusk, Ranvaik, and Setnes shrines. Newman has recently observed that the carved cells that frame the rock crystal centrepieces of the Bobbio shrine may have once held red enamel [Figure 22.D]. The enamel has since oxidised, making further observations difficult.<sup>522</sup> Still, red enamel can also be found on the ridgepole, suspension straps, and circular mounts of the Bologna shrine; it also appears on the Melhus shrine, where it is limited to a broad application on the surviving suspension strap; as for the Monymusk shrine, red enamel was applied to the surface of the surviving suspension strap, while a small sunburst or flower pattern of yellow enamel was placed on the lower hinge. Additionally, applications of red enamel border the circular and rectangular cast copper-alloy escutcheons; the rectangular escutcheons also feature a small piece of red enamel at their centres.

The Ranvaik shrine also features red enamel on the raised borders of its three escutcheons as well as the top of the ridgepole. However, unlike with the other shrines, the red enamel of the ridgepole can only be seen when viewing the shrine from above. This particular detail of the shrine lends further support to the theory that the shrines were worn around their keepers' necks, although it should be noted that the enamelling is visible from any above view.<sup>523</sup> Although it is the only shrine to feature this particular type of decoration, small depressions at the centre decoration on the Monymusk and Lough Erne (A) ridgepoles suggest that at one point, a piece of glass or enamel may have adorned the top of the shrines.<sup>524</sup> As evident both by the shrines that survive and by associated fragments, enamelling was

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<sup>522</sup> 'Examination of the Bobbio Reliquary/Chrismal'.

<sup>523</sup> O'Donoghue, 'Insular Chrismals and House-Shaped Shrines', 90-1.

<sup>524</sup> Stevenson, 'Further Notes', 473-4.



one of the primary means of decorating ridgepole terminals, mounts, and suspension straps. In comparison, the Emly shrine's enamel is more complex, with red, yellow, and green used on the three champlevé enamelled rings and the ridgepole terminals and centrepiece. The Blackwater terminal and ridgepole also feature yellow, green, and degraded red enamel. Finally, it is important to note that enamels or pigments may have also adorned glass inserts; in studying one of the St Ninian's Isle sword chapes under the microscope, I found that the red border was drawn around the blue glass eyes of the beast-head terminals [Figure 86] by a separate material and was not the border of a tube or another constructional means of securing the glass 'eyes' in place, as seen with the other St Ninian's Isle sword chape [87.A-B].

With the above in mind, it is important to note that while glass and gemstones each had specific Latin terms, they were connected by their colour and by glass's ability to mimic more precious stones. Indeed, glass, gems, and enamelling were each intimately linked to one another on constructional as well as symbolic levels. Within Isidore of Seville's widely copied seventh-century *Etymologiae*, his chapter *De lapidibus et metallis* places the entry for glass directly after his discussions of various gemstones, which Isidore groups by colour. After speaking on the origins and manufacturing of glass, Isidore writes on coloured varieties,

Tinguitur etiam multis modis, ita ut iacinthos sapphiros que et virides imitetur et onyches vel aliarum gemmarum colores; neque est alia speculis aptior materia vel picturae adcommodatior. Maximus tamen honor in candido vitro, proximo que in crystalli similitudine; unde et ad potandum argenti metalla et auri pepulit vitrum.<sup>525</sup>

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<sup>525</sup> 'Glass is also colored in many ways so that it may imitate hyacinth-stones, sapphires, green stones, and onyx, and the colors of other gems. There is no other material more fit for mirrors or more suitable for painting. 4. The highest esteem is granted to clear glass with its close similarity to crystal, whence glass has replaced the metals silver and gold for drinking vessels', translation in *The Etymologies of Isidore of Seville*, 328; Isidorus Hispalensis, *Etymologiarum*, Book: 16, Chapter: 16, Paragraph: 3.

Even clear glass, more worthy of praise by Isidore than the others likely due to the difficulty associated with its creation, is described as being like a stone or gem, in this case, crystal. Indeed, while rock crystal was understood to be water, made solid through extreme cold, the allegorical meaning attributed to both rock crystal and clear glass was based on their shared appearances. Bede refers to this in his *Explanatio Apocalypsis*, ‘fidem veri baptismi refertur ad vitrum, in quo non aliud videtur exterius quam quod gestat interius. Cristallo quoque, quod de aqua in glaciem et lapidem pretiosum efficitur, baptismi gratia figuratur’.<sup>526</sup> Here the crystal is related not only to water, but also the glass-like sea of Revelations. Equally so, the clarity of crystal is also related to the clarity of the mind. The rock crystal’s connection to purity has been noted by scholars such as Cynthia Hahn, Jacqueline Young, and Martina Bagnoli, through its use in medieval reliquaries both as a container and as a window through which to view relics.<sup>527</sup> However, the rock crystal of the Bobbio shrine does not allow one to see into the shrine. Its prominent position and the rock crystal’s association with baptism could lend further support to theories that Insular house-shaped shrines were used in baptisms and in carrying the Eucharist, as the base of the Aradgh chalice [Figure 88.A-B] also features a setting of rock crystal. Nevertheless, the relationship between rock crystal and clear glass was based on

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<sup>526</sup> ‘Glass. Because of our faith in the true baptism, this is compared to glass, in which nothing else appears on the outside than that which it has within. The grace of baptism is also represented by crystal, which is formed from water, congealed into a precious stone’, translation in *The Explanation of the Apocalypse by Venerable Bede*, trans. Edward Marshall (Oxford: James Parker and CO. , 1878), 31; Bede Venerabilis, *Explanatio Apocalypsis*, vol. 121A, Corpus Christianorum Series Latina (Turnhout: Brepols Publishers, 2001), Book: 1, Chapter: 5, Page: 281, Line: 53-6.

<sup>527</sup> Hahn, *Strange Beauty*; Jacqueline E. Jung, ‘Crystalline Wombs and Pregnant Hearts: The Exuberant Bodies of the Katharinenthal Visitation Group’, in *History of the Comic Mode: Medieval Communities & the Matter of Person*, ed. Rachel Fulton and Bruce W. Holsinger (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007), 223-37; Bagnoli, ‘Stuff of Heaven’, 137-47; Agius, *Anchoress and Abbess in Ninth-Century Saxony: The Lives of Liutbirga of Wendhausen and Hathumoda of Gandersheim*, trans. Frederick S. Paxton (Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 2009), 132.

colour relations. Indeed, the *Mappae clavicula*, compiled as early as the seventh century to as late as the twelfth, details the manufacture of various pigments, alloys, and other items used in the creation of art, thus exhibiting a similar pattern. While not as explicit in linking gems and glass, eight recipes for coloured glass follow recipes on different ways to make pigments of various colours and descriptions about how to polish gemstones. Of these glasses, two green (*prassina* and *melini*), two red (*rubea/rubeum*), a milky (*lactei*), a blood (*sanguinea*), and a red-purple (*alithina*) colour (*tinctio* and *coloris*) are mentioned.<sup>528</sup>

While perhaps not as costly as gemstones, glass was still a fine and precious material. In *Vita sancti Columbae*, Adomnán describes a scene in which an angel shows the name of the future king to Columba in a book of glass, ‘*Alio in tempore, cum vir praedicabilis in Hinba commoraretur insula, quadam nocte in extasi mentis angelum Domini ad se missum vidit, qui in manu vitreum ordinationis regum habebat librum: quem cum vir venerandus de manu angeli accepisset, ab eo jussus, legere coepit*’.<sup>529</sup> While the scene is written to show how Columba, through some angelic chastisement, eventually follows the will of God, the object used by the angel is a book of glass. The heaven-sent book thus records an instance where the precious nature of glass itself is attested.

While both the *Etymologiae* and the *Mappae clavicula* mention that coloured glass can be used to mimic certain gemstones, it is difficult to know what gemstones

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<sup>528</sup> Thomas Phillipps, ‘A Transcript of a Manuscript Treatise on the Preparation of Pigments, and on Various Processes of the Decorative Arts Practised During the Middle Ages, Written in the Twelfth Century, and entitled Mappae Clavicula’, *Archaeologia* 32 (1847): 218.

<sup>529</sup> ‘At one time, while the memorable man was living in the island of Hinba, he saw one night, in a trance of the mind, an angel of the Lord, who had been sent to him, and who had in his hand a glass book of the ordination of kings. And when the venerable man had received it from the hand of the angel by the angel’s command he began to read it’, translation in, *Adomnán’s Life of Columba*, 188-9. Adamnanus Hiiensis, *Sancti Adamani benedictini abbatis de vita sancti Columbae libri tres*, 88, Col.0761B.

were being referred to. Only on the Amiata shrine, which pairs red glass with garnets, is there any indication of an intended gemstone. Recently, Lawrence Nees has compared the garnets used in cloisonné belt mounts from Sutton Hoo to manuscript illuminations and textiles, while Niamh Whitfield has argued that the old Irish term *carmocol*, rather than referring to garnets, might have instead referred to imitation glass cloisonné studs such as those found on the Ardagh Chalice.<sup>530</sup>

Regarding possible sources of the garnets, Noël Adams's 2012 study examines the popularity of garnet intaglios in the late-antique period, citing possible sources of the gemstone in Asia Minor, which supports the testimony found in works such as Isidore's *Etymologiae*.<sup>531</sup> This eastern origin for early garnets is also attested to in the work of Cathy Daley and François Farges, who studied the chemical compositions of garnets found in Insular and Merovingian settings, although after the seventh century these were eventually replaced by garnets from Europe, in particular, Bohemia.<sup>532</sup>

While these studies have helped to cement the origins of the garnets, Peter Kitson's extensive study on lapidary traditions in Anglo-Saxon England offers a vital view into the exegetical tradition of gemstones and the complexities of their Latin and Old English terms. Kitson argues that throughout the Old English period, gemstones were referred to by their Latin names. In examining mid-tenth-century psalters and their accompanying glosses, such as the Salisbury Psalter, Salisbury Cathedral Library, MS 150, and Bald's Leechbook, British Library, Royal MS 12 D

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<sup>530</sup> Whitfield, 'Carmocol', 59-9; 'Dragon-stones', 82.

<sup>531</sup> Noël Adams, 'The Garnet Millennium: The Role of Seal Stones in Garnet Studies', in *'Gems of Heaven': Recent Research on Engraved Gemstones in Late Antiquity c. A.D. 200-600*, ed. Chris Entwistle and Noël Adams (London: British Museum, 2012), 16.

<sup>532</sup> Cathy Daly, 'Garnets and Gold: The Technical Examination of a Medieval Ring-Brooch', *Archaeology Ireland* 19, no. 3 (2005): 39; François Farges, 'Mineralogy of the Louvres Merovingian Garnet Cloisonné Jewelry: Origins of the Gems of the First Kings of France', *American Mineralogist* 83 (1998): 328-9.

XVII, Kitson argues that the garnets, which feature so prominently in Anglo-Saxon art, may have been admired simply as red stones (*readan stan*). In this case, the specific naming of stones in Latin exegesis would have been ‘a conceptual novelty for which Anglo-Saxon students needed some explanation’.<sup>533</sup> One such source could have been Bede’s *Explanatio Apocalypsis*.

The major sources for Bede’s *Explanatio Apocalypsis* were Jerome’s commentary on Isaiah 54:11–14, a Latin version of Epiphanius’s *Περὶ τῶν τῆς λίθων*, Pliny’s *Naturalis historia*, Isidore’s *De metalis et lapidibus*, Solinus, Anglo-Saxon lapidary glosses, the Hiberno-Latin *De duodecim lapidibus*, and possible passages on the topaz from St Ambrose.<sup>534</sup> While Bede does not speak of the garnet specifically, both garnets and rubies appear in Pliny’s section on the carbuncle, which he describes as looking like fire, ‘Principatum habent carbunculi a similitudine ignium appellati, cum ipsi non sentiant ignes, a quibusdam ob hoc acaustoe appellati. Horum genera Indici et Garamantici, quos et Carchedonios vocavere propter opulentiam Carthagini Magnae’.<sup>535</sup> Here the *carbunculus* not only offers a means of examining the exegetical importance of garnets but also further links a material used in the construction of house-shaped shrines with both light and fire.

Unfortunately, *De deodecim lapidibus*, a short chapter ascribed to Bede by Migne, has only one line that briefly describes the carbuncle, ‘Carbunculus colore

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<sup>533</sup> Peter Kitson, ‘Lapidary Traditions in Anglo-Saxon England: Part I, The Background’, *Anglo-Saxon England* 7 (1978): 28.

<sup>534</sup> ‘Lapidary Traditions in Anglo-Saxon England: Part II, Bede’s *Explanatio Apocalypsis* and Related Works’, *Anglo-Saxon England* 12 (1983): 78.

<sup>535</sup> ‘In the chief place, the garnet (*carbunculus*) is so called for its likeness to fire, while they themselves are not affected by fire, and by come called ‘acaustoi’ for this reason. There are various garnets, the Indian and Germanic, which has been called Carthaginian in complement to the opulence of Great Carthage’, Plinius maior, *Naturalis historia*, ed. L. Ian and C. Mayhoff (Leipzig: Teubner, 1892-1909), Book: 37, Page: 421, Line: 12.

rufeo, quem oculi amant, a longe splendorem spirat, et prope non videtur'.<sup>536</sup> The gemstone is red (*rufeo*) and pleasing to the eyes (*oculi amant*), though no further meaning is attributed to it. The Old English Lapidary also only records the colour of the stone, which looks like burning coal, 'Twelfta is carbunculus haten se is bymende glede gelic'.<sup>537</sup> To more fully understand the carbuncle, I turn to Gregory the Great's Pastoral Care, which compares the carbuncle to the jacinth, while in his *Moralia in Iob*, he lists a series of gemstones, which includes the carbuncle, and relates them all to the angelic orders,

Hinc est quod primatus eius potentiam adhuc insinuans idem propheta, subiungit: omnis lapis pretiosus operimentum tuum, sardius et topazius et iaspis, chrysolithus et onyx, et berillus, sapphirus, carbunculus et smaragdus. Nouem dixit genera lapidum, quia nimirum nouem sunt ordines angelorum.<sup>538</sup>

The carbuncle is also listed among other precious stones in Ezekiel 23:18 and Exodus 39:10, while Jerome's commentary on Isaiah, which incorporated the Biblical gem lists, included the carbuncle along with other precious stones, which collectively prefigured the Heavenly Jerusalem,

Quae sit ista coelestis Hierusalem, cui nunc dicitur: *Ecce ego sternam per ordinem lapides tuos: siue iuxta LXX: Ecce ego praeparabo tibi carbunculum, lapidem tuum: ut tota ciuitas sit plena carbunculis, et habeat fundamenta sapphirina, et propugnacula iaspidem, siue chalcidonium, et portas crystallinas, sive anaglyphas, et murum in circuitu pretiosorum lapidum: omnesque filii eius non habeant magistros homines, sed Deum, et appellentur discipuli Dei. Et sit in ea pax perpetua, et aedificatio iustitiae.*<sup>539</sup>

<sup>536</sup> 'Carbuncle, of red colour, which the eyes love, breathes its splendour from afar and is not seen close to', translation in Kitson, 'Lapidary Traditions in Anglo-Saxon England II', 102.

<sup>537</sup> 'The twelfth is called carbuncle. It is like a burning coal', translation in 'Lapidary Traditions in Anglo-Saxon England I', 32.

<sup>538</sup> 'Hence it is that the same Prophet, still speaking of the power of his superiority, subjoins; *Every precious stone was thy covering, the sardius, and topaz, and jasper, the chrysolite, the onyx, and the beryl, the sapphire, the carbuncle, and the emerald.* [Ez. 28, 13] He mentioned nine kinds of stones, doubtless because there are nine; orders of angels', translation in *Morals on the Book of Job*, trans. Members of the English Church, vol. 3 (Oxford: John Henry Parker, 1850), 549; Gregorius Magnus, *Moralia in Iob*, ed. M. Adriaen, vol. 143, Corpus Christianorum Series Latina (Turnhout: Brepols Publishers, 1979), Book: 32, Paragraph: 23, Line: 36.

<sup>539</sup> 'Which is that Heavenly Jerusalem, to which now it is called, 'Look, I will lay your stones in order; so that the city is full of carbuncles, and foundations of sapphires, or chalcedony, and gates of crystal, and the wall of precious stones around the city: Every one of his children do not have human teachers,

Many of the allegorical descriptions of the Biblical gems are extended in subsequent commentaries, which further use gems in their collective ability to prefigure the celestial city.<sup>540</sup>

While the ambiguous red glass of the Amiata shrine was likely used to match its garnets, the reddish glass of the Bologna shrine is not as straightforward. Instead, the red of the Bologna shrine's glass could conjure up thoughts of almost any red stone, including the sard and its connection to the martyrs. Furthermore, Kitson has observed that there was sometimes slippage between the jacinth, carbuncle, and even sapphires, which were often conflated with lapis lazuli.<sup>541</sup>

The blue glass of the Brussels, Clonmore, Clonard, Lough Erne (A), and Monymusk shrines, also resist being matched easily to specific gemstones. In discussing Carolingian use of gemstones on reliquaries and treasure bindings, Genevra Kornbluth states that medieval gem terms were not only variable, but centred on their colour and not their chemical properties. In this way, blue stones could be hyacinths, lapis lazuli, or sapphires, red stones could be sards or carbuncles, and green stones could either be jaspers or emeralds.<sup>542</sup> Isidore of Seville's *Etymologiae* has nine separate chapters on gemstones, each grouped by their colour. Indeed, the sapphire is even placed in the *De purpureis* section on purple gemstones, upsetting intuitive, at least by modern standards, divisions of the gemstones. Rather

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but [have] God [as their teacher], and are called the disciples of God. And there is a perpetual peace there, and an edifice of justice', Hieronymus, *Commentariorum in Esaiam libri xii-xviii. In Esaiam parvula adabbreviatio*, ed. M. Adriaen and G. Morin, vol. 73A, Corpus Christianorum Series Latina (Turnhout: Brepols Publishers, 1963), 609.

<sup>540</sup> Claudia Bolgia, 'New Light on the 'Bright Ages': Experiments with Mosaics and Light in Medieval Rome', in *New Light on Old Glass: Recent Research on Byzantine Mosaics and Glass*, ed. Chris Entwistle and Liz James (London: British Museum, 2013), 219-21.

<sup>541</sup> Kitson, 'Lapidary Traditions in Anglo-Saxon England II', 93.

<sup>542</sup> Genevra Kornbluth, 'The Heavenly Jerusalem and the Lord of Lords: A Sapphire Christ at the Court of Charlemagne and on the Shrine of the Magi', *Cahiers archéologiques* 49 (2001): 51-4.

than simply reading the blue glass found on Insular house-shaped shrines as sapphires specifically, following the work of Kitson and Kornbluth, a more fitting understanding would consider the colour of the glass. Here, just as red gemstones collectively could signify ‘the colour of earth, blood, and fire, signify the flesh of Adam and of Jesus, the passion of Christ and the martyrs, and the burning word of God’, blue stones, and likely blue glass, could ‘signify Heaven and its inhabitants’.<sup>543</sup> This heavenly association may even be echoed in the placement of blue glass near birds as seen with the Monymusk ridgepole’s zoomorphic terminals [Figure 14.A] and the zoomorphic hinge of the Clonard shrine [Figure 3.B].

Finally, enamelling and amber, while related to glass, do not appear to be mentioned specifically as material steeped in religious significance. Complicating matters, enamelling and amber are referred to by the same Latin word, *electrum*. Still, enamelling was associated with glass and gems, as seen in the twelfth-century *De diversis artibus* by Theophilus, who devotes an entire chapter, *De electro*, to enamel,

Hoc modo omnibus electris compositis et solidatis accipe omnia genera vitri, quod ad hoc opus aptaveris, et de singulis partibus parvum frangens colloca omnes fracturas simul super unam partem cupri, unamquamque partem per se; mittensque in ignem compone carbones in circuitu et desuper, sufflansque diligenter considerabis si sequaliter liquefiant: si sic, omnibus uter.<sup>544</sup>

Enamel then, according to Theophilus, is a type of glass, (*genera vitri*), which is heated and then ground to create the different powders used in the process. The

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<sup>543</sup> 'Bibliothèque Nationale MS Lat. 9383: Archaeology and Function of a Carolingian Treasure Binding', *Aachener Kunstblätter* 62 (2002): 195.

<sup>544</sup> ‘When, in this way, all the enamels have been composed and soldered, take all the kinds of glass that you have made ready for this work. Breaking a little from each piece, put all the fragments [of each glass] on a piece of copper, which is kept separate from the others. Place them on the fire, arrange the coals around and above them, and, as you blow, watch carefully to see if they melt evenly. If they do, use them all’, translation in Theophilus, *The Various Arts: De diversis artibus*, trans. C. R. Dodwell (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986), 105.



colours of these powders can be diverse, and in a separate chapter, Theophilus suggests that mosaic *tesserae* were potential sources, ‘Inveniuntur in antiquis aedificiis Paganorum in musivo opere diversa genera vitri videlicet album, nigrum, viride, perspicax, sed nesum in modum marmoris, et sunt quasi lapidi quadri, ex quibus fiunt electra in auro, argento et cupro, de quibus in suo loco sufficienter dicemus’.<sup>545</sup> While the recycling of mosaic pieces is described by Theophilus, David Buckton cites an experiment with enamelling on silver, following a recipe from Theophilus, at the twelfth annual medieval symposium at the British Museum in 1991. Over the course of the experiment, the ancient glass was found to have a melting point of 1000 degrees Celsius, while the silver melted at 960.8 degrees, perhaps explaining ‘why there is so little early medieval enamel on silver’.<sup>546</sup> Indeed, all the enamelling found on house-shaped shrines was executed on copper-alloy segments.

By mimicking the colour of gemstones, medieval patrons could open doors to rich exegetical traditions, as seen in Gregory the Great’s homily on Luke 10:1–7, ‘Lapides vero sanctuarii intrinsecus habebantur, nec sumebantur in summi sacerdotis corpore, nisi cum sancta sanctorum ingrediens, in secreto sui conditoris apparebat. Nos ergo sumus, fratres carissimi, nos sumus lapides sanctuarii, qui apparere semper debuimus in secreto Dei’.<sup>547</sup> Here Gregory the Great compares the adornment of

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<sup>545</sup> ‘In the ancient buildings of pagans, various kinds of glass are found in the mosaic works—white, black, green, yellow, blue, red, and purple. They are not transparent but opaque like marble, and are like little square stones. From these, enamels are made in gold, silver and copper, of which we shall speak fully in their place’, translation in *ibid.*, 44.

<sup>546</sup> David Buckton, ‘Theophilus and Enamel’, in *Studies in Medieval Art and Architecture Presented to Peter Lasko*, ed. David Buckton and T. A. Heslop (Dover: Alan Sutton Publishing, 1994), 9.

<sup>547</sup> ‘the precious stones of the sanctuary were kept inside it; the high priest wore them on his breast only when he entered the Holy of Holies and appeared secretly before the creator. We, dearly beloved, we are the precious stones of the sanctuary which ought to have appeared secretly before God’, translation in *Forty Gospel Homilies*, trans. Dom David Hurst (Kalamazoo: Cistercian Publications,

precious stones to the living Christian community, while Victricius of Rouen's fourth-century *De laude sanctorum* aligns gemstones with Christian virtues and visions of the afterlife,

Sunt hic diademata variis gemmarum distincta luminibus sapientiae, intellectus, scientiae, veritatis, consilii, fortitudinis, tolerantiae, temperantiae, iustitiae, prudentiae, patientiae, castitatis. Ista in lapidibus singulis sunt singulae expressae scriptaeque virtutes. Hic spiritalibus gemmis coronas martyrum artifex Saluator ornavit. Ad has gemmas animarum vela tendamus. Nihil in his fragile, nihil quod maius minuat, nihil quod sentiat detrimentum.<sup>548</sup>

Any metaphorical meaning of both the gems and the coloured glass of house-shaped shrines appears to reside more in the conceptualisation of colour, as the relationship between the colour of the gem and similarly coloured objects was the primary means of arriving at any metaphorical meaning. Complicating this, the classifications of gemstones are at times uncertain, as Marian Campbell observes. Writing on the etymology of the term *adamant*, Campbell notes, 'the terms *amans*, *adamas*, and *adamant*, although it sometimes means a diamond, often evidently does not'.<sup>549</sup>

While the coloured glass of house-shaped shrines may not all easily be matched to a gemstone, collectively the use of enamel, gems, glass, and metalwork came together to create an object worthy of being a miniature version of a more heavenly vision.

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1990), 146; Gregorius Magnus, *Homiliae in evangelia* vol. 141, Corpus Christianorum Series Latina (Turnhout: Brepols Publishers, 1999), Book: 1, Homily: 17, Page 130, Line: 345.

<sup>548</sup> 'Here are diadems adorned with the various splendour of the jewels of wisdom, intelligence, science, truth, counsel, strength, tolerance, temperance, justice, prudence, patience, chastity: in each of these stones is expressed and inscribed one of these virtues. The artist who has adorned with these spiritual jewels the Crown of the Martyrs is the Saviour. It is toward these jewels that we should set sail of our soul: there is nothing fragile in them, nothing that decreases, nothing which can feel the passage of time', translation in Victricius of Rouen, 'De laude sanctorum', in *Christianity and Paganism, 350-750*, ed. J. N. Hillgarth (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1986), 27; Victricius Rotomagensis, *De laude sanctorum*, ed. R. Demeulenaere, vol. 64, Corpus Christianorum Series Latina (Turnhout: Brepols Publishers, 1985), Chapter: 12, Page: 90, Line: 27-34.

<sup>549</sup> Marian Campbell, 'Gold, Silver and Precious Stones', in *English Medieval Industries*, ed. John Blair and Nigel Ramsay (London: The Hambledon Press, 1991), 144.

## Sanctifying, Quickening, and Protecting: Ornament as Ritual

Repeated patterns and ‘hidden’ symbols are a staple of medieval visual culture, with Insular art acting as a direct response to religious symbolism, the concept of divine revelation, and local aesthetic traditions.<sup>550</sup> Still, what can these ‘hidden’ symbols encompass and how might their employment be used to denote various functions for the object which they adorn? Stevenson examines the repetition of hidden ornamental crosses within a wide sample of artefacts—from a child’s sarcophagus in Ravenna, Italy to carpet pages in the Book of Durrow, to parts within Insular sculpture, such as a panel from the eighth-century St Andrew ‘sarcophagus’—and notes that each

acknowledges and demonstrates the mystery behind appearances, but by insisting on the accurate over-and-under of the strands symbolizes an underlying regularity such as the providential ordering of things; and by repeated Crosses, hidden and half-hidden as well as clear, insists on the all-pervasive presence of the victorious life giving Redeemer.<sup>551</sup>

Stevenson observes in his discussion of the Monymusk shrine that its ornamentation does not appear overtly Christian to modern viewers,

the apparent absence from the house-shaped Monymusk reliquary of ‘anything recognizable as a Christian symbol’ has had attention drawn to it by Mr Ian Finlay and by a reviewer of his book on St Columba. This has no doubt struck many people who have looked at the reliquary, and particularly at illustrations which emphasize its faint but elaborate decoration of seemingly irrelevant interlaced animals, gambolling round the gilt and enamelled medallions on the front wall and roof.<sup>552</sup>

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<sup>550</sup> See also, Megan M Hitchens, ‘Building on Belief: The Use of Sacred Geometry and Number Theory in the Book of Kells, f. 33r’, *Parergon* 13, no. 2 (1996): 121-36; Małgorzata Krasnodębska-D’aughton, ‘Decoration of the In principio Initials in Early Insular Manuscripts: Christ as a Visible Image of the Invisible God’, *Word & Image* 18, no. 3 (2002): 105-22; Michael Ryan, ‘The Derrynaflan Hoard and Early Irish Art’, *Speculum* 72, no. 04 (1997): 995-1017; Jennifer O’Reilly, ‘The Book of Kells: Folio 114r: A Mystery Revealed and Yet Concealed’, in *The Age of Migrating Ideas: Early Medieval Art in Northern Britain and Ireland*, ed. Michael R. Spearman and John Higgitt (Edinburgh: National Museums Scotland, 1993), 106-14.

<sup>551</sup> Robert B. K. Stevenson, ‘Aspects of Ambiguity in Crosses and Interlace’, *Ulster Journal of Archaeology* 44/45 (1981): 20.

<sup>552</sup> ‘Further Notes’, 473.

Rather than agree with Ian Finlay's comment of the lack of Christian symbols on the Monymusk shrine, Stevenson instead proposes that there are hidden Christian markers on the shrine, namely, that the placement of the decorative mounts on the face of the Monymusk shrine and the central decoration of the shrine's ridgepole, when viewed as a whole, creates a cross [Figure 89].

Scholars such as Blackwell elaborate on Stevenson's initial observation, suggesting, 'an obvious Christian interpretation for these designs composed in sets of three is an allusion to the Holy Trinity of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—although three is also a significant number in many other respects within Christianity'.<sup>553</sup> Blackwell's suggestion that the repetition of three escutcheons could be a reference to the Trinity is strengthened by a similar pattern of escutcheons found on the Bologna shrine and the appearance of triangular patterns on the Amiata, Clonmore, Emly, Lough Erne (A), Melhus, Ranvaik, Setnes, and Shannon shrines. While scholars such as Webster, Tilghman, and Richardson have each discussed the importance of subtle, somewhat hidden Christian symbolism and potential numerological symbolism in decorative bosses found on Insular art, no scholar at present has offered an examination of the placement of escutcheons on Insular house-shaped shrines as a group and their potential relation to the importance of the Trinity in Insular exegesis, liturgy, poetry, and hagiography.<sup>554</sup>

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<sup>553</sup> Blackwell, 'Individuals', 40.

<sup>554</sup> Leslie Webster, 'Encrypted Visions: Style and Sense in the Anglo-Saxon Minor Arts, A.D. 400-900', in *Anglo-Saxon Styles*, ed. Catherine E. Karkov and George Hardin Brown (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2003), 11-30; Benjamin Tilghman, 'On the Enigmatic Nature of Things in Anglo-Saxon Art', *Different Visions: A Journal of New Perspectives on Medieval Art* 4 (2014): 1-43; Hilary Richardson, 'Number and Symbol in Early Christian Irish Art', *The Journal of the Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland* 114 (1984): 28-47.

To more fully examine Blackwell's comment on the repetition of three found in the designs on Insular house-shaped shrines, it is important to outline which of the Insular house-shaped shrines follow this pattern and note any shrines whose decoration may appear on the periphery of this grouping. Thus, I will first note any similarities or differences in the placement of escutcheons, inserts, and inscribed ornamentations on Insular house-shaped shrines before turning to the comparative textual and visual sources. I will propose that the placement of escutcheons on Insular house-shaped shrines in crosses, *chis* (X), and triangles speak to the primacy of the Trinity and the Cross in the early-Christian cultures of the British Isles during the six to tenth centuries, which in turn had a sanctifying effect on the shrines.<sup>555</sup> Following this examination, I will discuss the difficulties inherent in assigning specific and singular functions to objects based on common Christian motifs.

While the term *ornament* carries connotations of purposelessness, I would like to emphasise instead ornament's rich exegetical importance, where colours, materials, and even locations are engaged in deep and meditative ways, where ornament actually can clarify the religious meaning or functions of an object.<sup>556</sup> For this study, *ornamentation* denotes any embellishment of the materials beyond their basic construction. Within the group of Insular house-shaped shrines, ornament can be divided into three visual subcategories: figural, vegetal, and geometric. Rather

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<sup>555</sup> For the interrelatedness of metalwork, stonework, and manuscript ornament in Insular art see, Martin Carver, *Portmahomack: Monastery of the Picts* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 106.

<sup>556</sup> Biblical exegesis is organised via a fourfold method of scriptural explanation: 1) the literal or historic significance of events, 2) the anagogic meaning of signs and portents that pointed to the future of Christian history or afterlife, 3) the typological meaning whereby the Old and New Testament were brought into harmony with one another, often with events of the Old Testament set up as prefiguration for the New Testament, and finally 4) the tropological meaning of the passages which concerned proper behaviour, see Beryl Smalley, *The Study of the Bible in the Middle Ages*, 3rd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983); *The Scriptures and Early Medieval Ireland*, ed. Thomas O'Loughlin (Turnhout: Brepols Publishers, 1999); *The Multiple Meaning of Scripture: The Role of Exegesis in Early-Christian and Medieval Culture*, ed. Ineke van't Spijker (Leiden: Brill, 2009).

than simply detail the occurrences of these forms of ornament, I would instead like to emphasise their functionality. As I will argue, these three categories of ornament have three functions on Insular house-shape shrines: sanctifying, quickening, and protecting. By *sanctifying*, I specifically mean that the ornament signals to the viewer that the object is precious and set apart for religious use. Similarly, by *quicken*ing, I mean that the ornament not only visually enlivens the shrines, imparting greater visual impact, but that the ornament also harkens back to Christianity's interest in both the Incarnation of God in Jesus Christ and the Resurrection of the body, particularly as seen in such passages as John 5:21, 'sicut enim Pater suscitatur mortuos et vivificat sic et Filius quos vult vivificat'.<sup>557</sup> Finally, by *protecting*, I specifically refer to the works of scholars who examine the apotropaic functions of interlace and zoomorphic ornament, as sacral places and matter required protection from corrupting forces or accident.<sup>558</sup> It should be noted that these categories are not mutually exclusive, and as this section will show, ornament can be seen as a perpetually active performance, a ritual, by which an audience is made aware of the sacral state of container and contents.<sup>559</sup>

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<sup>557</sup> 'For as the Father raises up the dead and enlivens them, even so the Son gives life to whom he wants', Hieronymus, *Biblia sacra iuxta Vulgatam versionem*, Chapter: 5, Verse: 21.

<sup>558</sup> James Trilling, 'Medieval Interlace Ornament: The Making of a Cross-Cultural Idiom', *Arte medievale* 9 (1995): 70-3; Ernst Kitzinger, 'Interlace and Icons: Form and Function in Early Insular Art', in *Age of Migrating Ideas*, ed. Michael R. Spearman and John Higgitt (National Museums of Scotland: Edinburgh, 1993), 3-4; Webster, 'Encrypted Visions', 15.

<sup>559</sup> For more on the function of signals, performativity, and rituals see, Craig T. Palmer and Christina Nicole Pomianek, 'Applying Signaling Theory to Traditional Cultural Rituals', *Human Nature* 18, no. 4 (2007): 295-312.

## Subtle Symbols of the Trinity: Tracking Patterns of Escutcheons

Nine of the eighteen Insular house-shaped shrines utilise a triangular arrangement for their ornamental designs or placement of escutcheons. The face of the Amiata shrine [Figure 20.A] is decorated with three dish-shaped gilt copper-alloy escutcheons that are further embellished with circular pieces of red glass, which mirrors the circular red garnets decorating the zoomorphic ridgepole. A similar application of materials and ornamentation is found on the Emly shrine [Figure 9.A]. Again, three escutcheons decorated with yellow and green enamel are placed on the face of the shrine, although their inserts no longer survive. The Melhus shrine [Figure 16.A] differs slightly with its circular panels of copper alloy set within simple rings; however, the placement of these flatter ornaments still follows the same pattern as the Emly and Amiata shrines. The Shannon shrine differs again in the details of the escutcheons, which are square with a gilt chip-carved interlace frame that once bordered now-lost inserts [Figure 4.8]. Again, the placement of these escutcheons is essentially identical to the previously mentioned shrines.

However, these are not the only Insular shrines that feature triangular placements of escutcheons. On the front of the Lough Erne (A) shrine [Figure 5.A-B], only one of three escutcheons survive, while the back of the shrine shows evidence for three other circular escutcheons, with only two of their frames surviving. Next, the face of the Ranvaik shrine [Figure 19.A-B] is decorated with three rectangular escutcheons, while the back features three circular mounts arranged in the same triangular shape. A similar application of three circular mounts is also seen on the back of the Bologna shrine [Figure 23.C]. The Setnes shrine [Figure 17.A-B] differs from the above in its use of lozenge-shaped mounts, and while there

is evidence for mounts arranged in triangles on the face and back of the shrine, only two mounts currently survive. Finally, the back of the Clonmore shrine [Figure 10.B] features three incised circles filled with trumpet and spiral patterns.

While other Insular house-shaped shrines exhibit more complex arrangements of escutcheons, triangles again appear. The back of the Bologna shrine [Figure 23.A] features triangularly arranged escutcheons, while the face of the shrine is seemingly a mirror of the Monymusk shrine [Figure 14.A]. On the lid of the Bologna shrine, two circular mounts flank a rectangular escutcheon, while three escutcheons appear on the lower container, although the pattern has been reversed here and two rectangular escutcheons flank a circular mount. These placements are reversed on the Monymusk shrine; however, the overall pattern of alternating shapes is still present. Indeed, the circular escutcheons are arranged in alignment with the circular zoomorphic terminals, thus creating a *chi*-form as well. The similarities between the Bologna and Monymusk shrines have been noted by other scholars; however, it is important to this discussion of numerology and symbolism to emphasise that the placement of all escutcheons on these two shrines still consists of patterns of three. When taking the appearances of triangular-placed mounts on nine Insular house-shaped shrines into consideration, the Monymusk and Bologna shrines do not simply display subtle cross-forms, but the placement of each shrines' circular and rectangular mounts, respectively, further creates a triangle. Indeed, this repetition of three is triplicated on these two shrines, as the box and lids of the Monymusk and Bologna shrines each feature three escutcheons each, while the ridgepole could be seen as referring to this interest in three, as the zoomorphic terminals themselves flank a miniature shrine form.



Finally, the Clonmore shrine also features notable placements of inserts. The Clonmore shrine differs from the above shrines not only in its use of glass set directly into the shrine's panels, but also in the unique placement of this blue glass; on the lid, three pieces of blue glass are arranged in a downward pointing triangle, while two pieces of blue glass are set into the lower section of the shrine [Figure 10.A]. When viewed separately, the pieces of blue glass appear random, however, following Stevenson's visual methodology, a *chi*-shape emerges from the face of the shrine when the glass settings are viewed as a whole.

Taking the above into account, while twelve of the eighteen surviving Insular house-shaped shrines feature triangles, crosses, or *chi*-shapes, the six remaining shrines do not necessarily undermine these patterns of three. The Brussels and Clonard shrines are unfortunately too fragmented to definitively determine the placements of all its escutcheons. Still, the Brussels fragment features a central circular mount flanked by two lozenge-shaped frames [Figure 28], suggesting that the shrine's placement of escutcheons may have been similar to the Monymusk and Bologna shrines, forming a cross and triangle. Similarly, while the Clonard shrine [Figure 3.A] is missing its roof and one of the two lower escutcheons, when accounting for the size of the surviving escutcheon and the tendency of Insular house-shaped shrines to have proportional escutcheons, the shrine was likely originally fitted with three large circular escutcheons whose placement formed a simple triangle on the face of the shrine.

The lid of the London shrine [Figure 27] is divided into four sections of interlace by a large incised X, while the lower panel is decorated with three circular

patterns reminiscent of disk-brooches [Figure 90].<sup>560</sup> While subtle, this repetition of three on the lower panel and the possible *chi*-based pattern on the lid, when viewed within the overall group of Insular house-shaped shrines, suggests that the shrine's later date and strong Anglo-Saxon or Viking influences may not have separated it too much from the overall expected patterns of ornamentation found on other Insular house-shaped shrines. Indeed, a similar composition is seen on one of the Blackwater ridgepoles [Figure 13.A], which has a miniature shrine form at its centre, decorated with three small squares of enamel while the 'lid' of the 'shrine' is decorated with a small yellow triangle.

Next, the Mortain and Moissac shrines are both without inserts or escutcheons on their panels. However, the Mortain shrine's iconography features three angelic figures arranged in a simple triangle, with Christ depicted in the centre [Figure 26.A]. Even more subtle, the Moissac shrine's ridgepole [Figure 25.I] is decorated by three small, now empty, settings. While the Moissac shrine's overall figural ornamentation does not feature patterns of three, the three settings found along the ridgepole, along with the three names of Christ also inscribed there, may be a subtle engagement with such patterns.

Far more divergent patterns can be found on the Hokksund and Bobbio shrines. The Hokksund shrine is too fragmented to securely determine the overall ornamentation of the shrine; however, three rows of three *millefiori* settings were placed into the surviving copper-alloy panel [Figure 18.A]. While it is unknown what the overall composition of the ornament on the entire shrine would have been, the surviving panel is reminiscent of the glass, gemstone, and cameos found on

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<sup>560</sup> Wilson, 'Anglo-Saxon Casket', 49.

Continental purse-shaped shrines such as the eighth-century shrine from Sens Cathedral, France [Figure 91.A-E] and the eighth-century Enger Reliquary [Figure 92.A-E]. Finally, the Bobbio and Lough Erne (B) shrines also do not fit neatly within this study of threes and triangles, as the Bobbio shrine was only fitted with two pieces of rock crystal set in the lid and box on the face of the shrine, while the Lough Erne (B) shrine is plain in appearance. While it could be argued that the trumpet and scrolls on the face of Bobbio the shrine could be seen as abstracted *chi*-shapes, this is perhaps too speculative [Figure 22.A].

### **Eucharistic Imagery or Multifunction Motifs? The Multivalent Meaning and Function of Ornament**

In light of the overall group, the repetition of three on Insular house-shaped shrines is a prevalent feature of their ornamentation, more so than previous scholarship has acknowledged. However, before delving into potential numerological references, it is important to note that religious associations with the numbers three, five, and nine can vary widely in Insular sources.<sup>561</sup> As Clancy and Markus observe in their examination of Ionian poetry, ‘the use of triads and tetrads...may well originate in native techniques of organising and categorising knowledge, rather than an adaption of biblical models’.<sup>562</sup> Indeed, the *Apgitir chrábaid*, reportedly written by Colmán mac Béognae, founder of the monastery of Lann Elo in the midlands of Ireland in the seventh to the eighth century, offers an example of this mnemonic

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<sup>561</sup> Richardson, 'Number and Symbol', 28-30.

<sup>562</sup> Thomas Owen Clancy and Gilbert Márkus, *Iona: The Earliest Poetry of a Celtic Monastery* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1995), 198.

function.<sup>563</sup> The poem explains the necessary traits one needs to secure salvation along with potential sinful obstacles, ‘Is ē trā costud inna clērchecta is sí ind lēre mesraigthe in so iar nDīa. Int-í fod-giguil nod-comalnabathar ra-mbiat cēt dīabla I talmain ra-mbia flaith nime’.<sup>564</sup> The poem arranges its pastoral advice primarily within twos, threes, and fours, and there is no apparent symbolic separation between the numbers, as triads are used to discuss sin and virtues interchangeably, ‘Trí nāmait anmae: domun dīabul forcetlaid anetail. Trēide in-ārben spirat forlūamma do-gnīat mens fossad .i. frithaire ernaigthe lebair’.<sup>565</sup> Sims-Williams further notes that the ‘medieval Irish and Welsh texts present traditional native lore for the use of bards, lawyers, moralists and others in the form of triads with such frequency that the triad may justly be described as a characteristically, though not exclusively, Celtic mnemonic device’.<sup>566</sup>

A prominent example of this long tradition of triads can be seen with the *Trecheng breth Féne*, first compiled in the ninth century, which contains over 210 separate triads in Old Irish. The triads themselves are primarily occupied with the passing on of knowledge—‘Trí hinbera Hérenn: Inber na mBárc, Inber Féile, Inber Túaige’—and maxims—‘Trí adcoillet gáis: anfis, doas, díchuimne’.<sup>567</sup> Rather than consider every instance of triads within Insular literature, any analysis of the

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<sup>563</sup> Craig Haggart, 'Some Comments on the Date of Compilation of the Apgitir Chrábaid', *Studia Hibernica*, no. 35 (2008): 14-5.

<sup>564</sup> ‘The one who will be in the unity of the Catholic church and in tranquillity of the hope of Heaven, and will fulfil the commandments as they are commanded, shall have hundredfolds on earth and will have eternal life in heaven’, translation in Clancy and Márkus, *Earliest Poetry of a Celtic Monastery*, 202; Vernam Hull, 'Apgitir Chrabaid: The Alphabet of Piety', *Celtica* 8 (1968): 58.

<sup>565</sup> ‘Three enemies of the soul: the world, and the devil and an unholy teacher. Three things which drive out a restless spirit and create a stable mind: vigil and prayer and labour’, translation in Clancy and Márkus, *Earliest Poetry of a Celtic Monastery*, 204; Hull, 'Apgitir Chrabaid: The Alphabet of Piety', 70.

<sup>566</sup> Patrick Sims-Williams, 'Thought, Word and Deed: An Irish Triad', *Ériu* 29 (1978): 78.

<sup>567</sup> ‘The three estuaries of Ireland: Inver na mBárc, Inver Feile, Inver Túaige’ and ‘Three things that ruin wisdom: ignorance, inaccurate knowledge, forgetfulness’, translation in *The Triads of Ireland*, trans. Kuno Meyer (Dublin: Hodges, Figgis, & Co., Ltd., 1906), 6-7, 32-3.

triangular arrangement of the escutcheons, which likely held multiple meanings, must be examined in light of religious writings that incorporate the body of the viewer, as Insular house-shaped shrines were constructed to be portable and were possibly hung on the body of itinerant clerics—and, as Clancy, Markus, and Sims-Williams argue, the issue may fall outside of direct Biblical symbolism into more native explorations of symbol and number. Indeed, common symbols can be translated from the verbal or textual into the visual, bound and defined by their context, perhaps similar to how zoomorphic interlace, which appears on a variety of Insular art forms, when adorning a belt buckle may specifically refer to an eighth-century tale in which a snake slides into the warrior Conall Cernach's waist belt 'and he speedily conquers the fortress. Here a ribbon or band is literally filled with a live force'.<sup>568</sup> In this sense, the body of the viewer can act as a further means of contextualising seemingly generic ornament.

Perhaps the most explicit example of the multiple layers of bodily meaning, the celebration of the Eucharist, offers a fitting window through which to examine how the body of a participant, the body of the Church, and the body of Christ interact to inform each other's symbolic function. One example from Insular liturgy that also engages with numerological symbolism can be found in the Stowe Missal, Royal Irish Academy, MS D ii 3, an eighth-century Latin and Gaelic sacramentary discovered in a stone wall at Lackeen Castle.<sup>569</sup> Within the office of the Mass, the priest is directed to bow before the Eucharistic service three times. Shortly afterwards, the missal states, 'Nat tri chemmen cinges in fergraith for a culu, oculus

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<sup>568</sup> Kitzinger, 'Interlace and Icons', 3.

<sup>569</sup> Thomas F. O'Rahilly, 'The History of the Stowe Missal', *Ériu* 10 (1926): 106; Pádraig Ó Riain, 'The Shrine of the Stowe Missal, Redated', *Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy. Section C: Archaeology, Celtic Studies, History, Linguistics, Literature* 91C (1991): 294-5.

toeing afirthisi, ised a trede in imruimdethar cach duine, idon, himbrethir, hi cocell, hingnnim; oculus ised trede tressanaithnuighther iterum, oculus trisatoscighther do Chorp Crist'.<sup>570</sup> Here the central performance of the Mass, the celebration of the Eucharist, specifically refers to a triad, and ritual renewal is thus embodied within the number three. Indeed, the Stowe Missal's most extensive discussion of numerological symbolism relates directly to the distribution of the Eucharist,

Ataat secht ngne forsin chombugg: idon, cuic parsa di obli choitchinn, hi figuir cuic sense anmæ. A secht di obli noeb oculus huag, acht na huaisli, hi figuir secht ndana Spiritus Sancti. A ocht di obli martir, hi figuir ind nui fhiadnisi ochti. A noe di obli domnich, hi figuir noe montar nimæ oculus noe ngraith æcalsa. A oen deac di obli Apstal, hi figuir inna airme anfuir[b]t(h)e Apostolorum iarn immarmus Iudæ. A di deac di obli calann oculus c(h)enlai, hi foraitmut airmæ foirbte inna nApstal. A teora deac di obli minchasc oculus fresgabaleprius, ce fodailter ni bes miniu iarum, oc techt do laim-, hi figuir Crist cona dib nApstalaib deac.<sup>571</sup>

The missal goes on to explain how the Eucharist should be arranged on the paten in the shape of a cross surrounded by a circle and to whom each portion of the Eucharist should be given. The entire distribution is formulaic and accommodates various numbers of attendants. As for the numbers themselves, five here is related to the five senses, nine to the Church and Heaven, and twelve to the Apostles, the Last Supper, and the Feast of the Circumcision. While the Stowe Missal is not the sole source of numerological symbolism, it likely reflects a wider understanding of the

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<sup>570</sup> 'Three steps which the ordained man steps backwards and which he steps in return, that is the triad wherein sinneth every person, to wit, in word, in thought, in deed; and that is the triad through which he is renewed again and through which he is moved to the Body of Christ', translation by Rev. Dr. MacCarthy in Frederick Edward Warren, *The Liturgy and Ritual of the Celtic Church* (Piscataway: Gorgias Press, 2010), 250.

<sup>571</sup> 'There are seven kinds upon the Fraction: that is, five parts of the common Host, in figure of the five senses of the soul. Seven of the Host of Saints and Virgins, except the chief ones, in figure of the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit. Eight of the Host of Martyrs, in figure of the octonary New Testament. Nine of the Host of Sunday, in figure of the nine folks of heaven and of the nine grades of the Church. Eleven of the Host of Apostles, in figure of the imperfect number of the Apostles after the scandal of Judas. Twelve of the Host of the kalends [of January, i.e., Circumcision] and of [last] Supper day, in remembrance of the perfect number of the Apostles. Thirteen of the Host of Little Easter [Low Sunday] and of the feast of Ascension—at first, although they are distributed more minutely afterwards, in going to Communion—in figure of Christ with His twelve Apostles', translation by Rev. Dr. MacCarthy in *ibid.*, 251-4.

symbolism inherent in numbers than other sources. From this, we can see how the numbers of decorative mounts and glass settings might relate to various symbolic pairings, and in the context of the Mass and the Eucharist as well. Despite these various symbolic meanings, each subdivision is directly linked to the Eucharist and those physically in attendance during the Mass. As such, the number three is not directly addressed in the Stowe Missal beyond references to the Trinity, its place in the mass as a ritual action, and the virtues and vices inherent in thoughts, words, and deeds. While the placement of decorative mounts could allude to Eucharistic themes, it should be noted that this does not preclude other possible interpretations nor the wider religious meaning of the Eucharist as ritual, which includes community, salvation, and resurrection.

Regarding potential figural liturgical imagery, Webster argues that the Mortain and Moissac shrines depict references to the Eucharist and baptism. The face of the Mortain shrine [Figure 26.A] depicts Christ flanked by the archangels Michael and Gabriel, with the Holy Spirit, flanked by two inward-facing birds, depicted on the lid. While the figures of Christ, the Holy Spirit, and the archangels do not at first appear to lend themselves to strong Eucharistic interpretations, Webster argues that the circular objects held by the two archangels are representations of the Eucharist due to their round shape and the inscription found on the reverse of the shrine, which I problematized in chapter one.<sup>572</sup> Similar interpretations of round objects are also found in Barbara Raw's interpretation of the Fuller Brooch [Figure 93], a ninth-century Anglo-Saxon disc brooch that depicts the five senses. Raw argues that the round boss at the centre of Sight's chest could be read as the Eucharist in light of

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<sup>572</sup> *The Making of England*, 175-6.

Ælfric of Eynsham's tenth-century homilies emphasising the relationship between internal and external perception of the Eucharist's sanctity.<sup>573</sup> While Webster has described the round objects held by Christ and the SS Gabriel and Michael depicted on the Mortain shrine as possible representations of the Eucharist, Osieczkowska offers a more cautious interpretation of the round objects, citing widespread iconographic programs from Insular, Byzantine, and Coptic art that depict angels presenting Christ with wreaths of victory; indeed, the round objects held by the archangels are not without further embellishment, as small details become clearer when viewing the back of the panel [Figure 26.F].<sup>574</sup> It should be noted that the Mortain shrine does not depict more prevalent Eucharistic scenes, such as the miracle of the loaves and fishes, while the archangels Gabriel and Michael are also traditionally given apotropaic functions in Insular prayer and liturgy.<sup>575</sup>

One prayer with both Irish and Anglo-Saxon connections is the so-called *Lorica of Laidcenn* or Gildas, a seventh-century to ninth-century prayer for divine protection that appears in the ninth-century Book of Cerne and Books of Nunnaminster.<sup>576</sup> The *lorica* begins by invoking the protective qualities of the Trinity and continues by invoking the archangels, seraphim, and cherubim for protection as well, 'Ne me linquant lacerandum hostibus. Sed defendant iam armis fortibus et illi me recedant in acie caelestis exercitus militiae. Cheruphin et seraphin cum milibus et

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<sup>573</sup> Barbara C. Raw, *Trinity and Incarnation in Anglo-Saxon Art and Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 70-6.

<sup>574</sup> *The Making of England*, 175-6; Cahen, *L'inscription runique*, 55-66.

<sup>575</sup> Jane Hawkes, 'Sacraments in Stone: The Mysteries of Christ in Anglo-Saxon Sculpture', in *The Cross Goes North: Processes of Conversion in Northern Europe, A.D. 300-1300*, ed. Martin Carver (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2005), 364; Richard F. Johnson, 'Archangel in the Margins: St. Michael in the Homilies of Cambridge, Corpus Christi College 41', *Traditio* 53 (1998): 91.

<sup>576</sup> Michael Herren, 'The Authorship, Date of Composition and Provenance of the So-Called "Lorica Gildae"', *Ériu* 24 (1973): 50-1.



Mihahel Gabrihel similibus'.<sup>577</sup> The pairing of Michael and Gabriel on the Mortain shrine may have been understood in relation to such invocations to the angels for protection.<sup>578</sup>

In comparison, the Moissac shrine [Figures 25.A-E] features more extensive figural scenes, including a scene possibly referring to either the Eucharist or baptism. As Webster observes with the Moissac shrine, 'the iconography of the front panel shows the triumphant risen Christ, the Saviour flanked by vine scrolls evoking Christ as the *vitis vera*, the true vine that represents Christ nourishing his church...the back panels show the image of deer feeding on the true vine, the Tree of Life, which is associated with Baptism'.<sup>579</sup> While scholars have linked the image of deer flanking chalices or fonts as references to Psalms 42 and 63 and their appearances in relation to the rite of baptism and the Eucharist, it is important to remember that more generally baptism was a ritual action that bestowed divine, saving grace.<sup>580</sup> As Paul Underwood observes in his study of the iconography of the Fountain of Life, 'Saint Cyprian, among others, had long since established the apposition of the four rivers and their source to *Ecclesia* and the four Evangelists and linked the 'celestial inundation' to baptism...[and] the symbolism of the numbers six and eight had begun to be adopted in the architecture of some baptisteries and fonts'.<sup>581</sup> As for the

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<sup>577</sup> 'Do not leave me to be lacerated by the enemy. But they defend me, already steadfast and joined together, and I retreat into the battle line of the army of the heavenly Host. Together with cherubim and seraphim, with the innumerable (angels) and Michael and Gabriel', translation in Arthur Benedict Kuypers, *The Prayer Book of Aedeluald the Bishop: Commonly Called the Book of Cerne* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1902), 85.

<sup>578</sup> Tomas P. O'Nowlan, 'A Prayer to the Archangels for Each Day of the Week', *Ériu* 2 (1905): 92-4.

<sup>579</sup> Webster, 'Anglo-Carolingian Chrismatory', 70.

<sup>580</sup> Underwood, 'Fountain of Life in Manuscripts of the Gospels', 71; Tomás Ó Carragáin, 'Archaeology Of Early Medieval Baptism At St Mullin's, Co Carlow', *Peritia* 21 (2010): 292-95; Tomás O'Sullivan, 'The Miraculous Production of Water from Rock and the Impact of Exegesis on Early Irish Hagiography', *Eolas: The Journal of the American Society of Irish Medieval Studies* 3 (2009): 28-35.

<sup>581</sup> Underwood, 'Fountain of Life in Manuscripts of the Gospels', 115-6.

Moissac shrine, Christ is flanked by two separate vines, with the back panels depicting two single vines that break off into two shoots each, perhaps a reference to the number six as a symbol of renewal and the number of the current epoch which began with Christ's incarnation.<sup>582</sup> Still, the vines and indeed their connection to Christian themes of spiritual regeneration may have been employed on the shrine for less specific reasons. Other Continental shrines such as the Utrecht [Figures 77.A-D], Warnebertus [37.A-C], and Muotathal shrines [Figure 94] also depict fruit-laden vines or chalices with erupting vines and, indeed, the inscription of the Warnebertus shrine explicitly connects its container to relics, not the Eucharist.<sup>583</sup> Similar vegetal motifs on Continental shrines require us to question the extent to which these types of ornament carry either exclusive or expansive meanings and functions.

These vines may refer to the vivifying rituals of the Church in general rather than to specific rites. A similar issue is seen with Ittai Weinryb's study of vegetal patterns used on the Hamburg reliquary and in manuscripts such as the Hezilo Evangeliary, the Paderborn Gospels, Bernward Bible, the Burkhardt Evangeliary, and St Hubert's Bible. Focusing on the term *silva*, Weinryb argues that the proliferation of vegetal ornament in medieval bronzeworks and manuscripts could allude to the primal matter referenced in Genesis. Weinryb uses Calcidius's commentary on *Timaeus* and Isidore of Seville's *Etymologiae* to discuss how the use of *silva*, as opposed to the Greek *hyle*, to denote primal matter carried with it

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<sup>582</sup> Beda Venerabilis, *De temporibus liber*, ed. T. Mommsen and C. W. Jones, vol. 123C, Corpus Christianorum Series Latina (Turnhout: Brepols Publishers, 1980), Chapter: 16, Line: 16-20.

<sup>583</sup> See chapter one for a discussion of the inscription found on the Warnebertus shrine and chapter three for a discussion of the construction of Insular house-shaped shrines and their relation to Continental *comparanda*.

connotations of growth and fecundity, via its literal Latin translation.<sup>584</sup> By referring to this rich exegetical tradition, Weinryb argues that different materials and ornament could denote abstract concepts, such as primal matter. In like manner, the inhabited vines found on the sides of the Gandersheim shrine, which Webster also links to baptismal rites, could be read as references to both the visual culture of the Mediterranean—the birthplace of Christianity and the site of its temporal power—to broader themes of Paradise and spiritual fecundity.<sup>585</sup>

I wish to draw attention to triangular patterns, their possible connection to the Trinity, and the apotropaic power they exhibit in Insular literature. As Tilghman explains in his analysis of John 1:1 in the Book of Durrow, Trinity College, MS A. 4. 5. (57), fol. 193r, [Figure 95], ‘the words ‘deus’ and ‘deum’ in black, each rendered using a Greek delta (Δ) rather than a Roman D...[appears] in a passage crucial to the understanding of Christ the Word as coeternal and consubstantial with the Father, it seems likely that the deltas, as triangles, are an iconographic reference to the Trinity’.<sup>586</sup> Tilghman’s claim is strengthened when one considers Isidore of Seville’s discussion of the etymology of *deus*, ‘Nam Deus Graece δέος, φόβος dicitur, id est timor, unde tractum est Deus, quod eum colentibus sit timor. Deus autem proprie nomen est Trinitatis pertinens ad Patrem et Filium et Spiritum sanctum’.<sup>587</sup> Thus the

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<sup>584</sup> Ittai Weinryb, ‘Living Matter: Materiality, Maker, and Ornament in the Middle Ages’, *Gesta* 52 (2013): 123-31.

<sup>585</sup> Webster, ‘Gandersheim Casket’, 67-72; Claudine Dauphin, ‘The Development of the “Inhabited Scroll” in Architectural Sculpture and Mosaic art from late Imperial Times to the Seventh Century A.D.’, *Levant* 19, no. 1 (1987): 190-2; Éamonn Ó Carragáin, ‘Conversion, Justice, and Mercy at the Parousia: Liturgical Apocalypses from Eighth-Century Northumbria, on the Ruthwell and Bewcastle Crosses’, *Literature and Theology* 26, no. 4 (2012): 369-72.

<sup>586</sup> Benjamin Tilghman, ‘The Shape of the Word: Extralinguistic Meaning in Insular Letting’, *Word & Image: A Journal of Verbal/Visual Enquiry* 27 (2011): 292.

<sup>587</sup> ‘The name *Deus* in Latin has been transliterated from a Greek term, for *Deus* is from δέος in Greek, which means φόβος, that is, “fear,” whence is derived *Deus* because those worshipping him have fear. Moreover ‘God’ is properly the name of the Trinity, referring to the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit’, translation by Barney et al in *The Etymologies of Isidore of Seville*, 153; Isidorus Hispalensis, *Etymologiarum*, Book: 7, Chapter: 1.

choice to use the delta for *deum* in the Book of Durrow may point not only to the Trinity through its triangular shape, but also to the Greek origin of the term *deus*. The delta or triangle is not alone in this, as the lozenge can also act as a visual doorway to the divine Word of God as seen ‘in the transliteration of the letter O into an omega’, which can be seen in the Barberini Gospels, Biblioteca Apostolica, Barberini Lat. MS 570, fol. 18r [Figure 96].<sup>588</sup> The Barberini Gospels’ *Chi Rho* page displays the enlarged *chi* (X) which begins the name of Christ as it first appears in the New Testament. At the centre of the *chi* is a lozenge with an anthro-zoomorphic figure, bringing the viewer’s attention to the two forms which create the cross, reinforcing the idea that ‘just as the dualities of Christ are dependent on one another and indissoluble, no element can be removed from the composition without rendering the others incomprehensible’.<sup>589</sup> This lozenge form can also be seen with the figure of Sight depicted on the centre of the previously mentioned Fuller Brooch [Figure 93], which suggests some connection between the lozenge and visibility, a connection between seeing the divine and acting as a frame to deeper mysteries.<sup>590</sup> The lozenge forms the centre of the *chi*, thus acting as a *kairos*, the nexus point through which the word of God is made flesh and indeed perhaps referring to the final wound delivered by Longinus that ended Christ’s Passion.<sup>591</sup>

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<sup>588</sup> Tilghman, 'Shape of the Word', 297.

<sup>589</sup> Ibid., 301.

<sup>590</sup> Corine Schleif, 'The Crucifixion with Virtues in Stained Glass: Wounds, Violent Sexualities, and Aesthetics of Engagement in the Wienhausen Cloister', *Journal of Glass Studies* 56 (2014): 221-30.

<sup>591</sup> *Kairos* can be understood as a window between the mundane world of manifestation and chronological time and the eternal, ‘*Kairos* is not the quantitative time of the clock, but the qualitative time of the occasion, the right time. There are things that happen when the right time, the *kairos*, has not yet come...It was in this sense that Paul and the early church spoke of the *kairos*, the right time for the coming of Christ. The early church, and Paul to a certain extent, tried to show why the time in which Christ appears was the right time, how his appearance was made possible by a providential constellation of factors’, Paul Tillich, *A History of Christian Thought*, ed. Carl E. Braaten (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1967), 1.

While I am not arguing for a direct textual linkage between the Book of Durrow and every instance of a triangular pattern or lozenge-shaped mounts such as those found on the Brussels and Setnes shrines [Figures 28, 17.B], the scribe's choice to render the name of God with a *delta* suggests that at least some learned viewers would see within the *delta* and triangle a reference to the triune nature of God. Indeed, the *Altus prosator*, a seventh or eighth-century poem traditionally attributed to St Columba begins,

Altus prosator vetustus dierum et ingenitus  
erat absque origine primordii et crepdine  
est et erit unigenitus Christus et sanctus spiritus  
cui est unigenitus Christus et sanctus spiritus  
coaeternus in Gloria deitatis perpetua  
non tres deos depromimus sed unum Deum dicimus  
salva fidei in personis tribus gloriosissimis.<sup>592</sup>

The poem is divided into twenty-three stanzas of six verses, save for the first stanza which has seven; the first letters of the stanzas move progressively through the alphabet. As Margaret Wesseling observes, the discrepancy between the first and the remaining stanzas may be linked to numerological symbolism, with the opening stanza on the Trinity reflecting the seven days of creation along with the primacy of God over creation.<sup>593</sup> Specifically, I would like to emphasise how the poem opens with a call to the Trinity, which is mirrored elsewhere in Insular poetry and liturgy, in particular the *loricae*.<sup>594</sup> Moreover, the same skills necessary to appreciate the symbolic relationships between the *delta* as both a Latin D and a triangle are required

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<sup>592</sup> 'The High Creator, the Unbegotten Ancient of Days, was without origin of beginning, limitless. He is and He will be for endless ages of ages, with whom is the only-begotten Christ, and the Holy Spirit, co-eternal in the everlasting glory of divinity. We do not confess three gods, but say one God, saving our faith in three most glorious Persons', translation in Clancy and Márkus, *Earliest Poetry of a Celtic Monastery*, 44-5.

<sup>593</sup> Margaret Wesseling, 'Structure and Image in the "Altus Prosator": Columba's Symmetrical Universe', *Proceedings of the Harvard Celtic Colloquium* 8 (1988): 47.

<sup>594</sup> Bernard Mees, *Celtic Curses* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2009), 113-36.

to see the same in regards to the placement of escutcheons on Insular house-shaped shrines.

Medieval artisans may have constructed Insular house-shaped shrines to display triangularly placed mounts and other potentially apotropaic figures because whether in the hands of saints or simple monks, the containers of sacral matter were associated with both miraculous powers and accidents. As discussed in chapter one, the *Vita sancti Comgalli* records a scene in which the saint's chrismal frightens a group of men wishing to do him harm while he works in a field.<sup>595</sup> The robbers equate St Comgall's chrismal with divine protection, although chrismals themselves were still subject to neglect and abandonment. The *Columbanus Regula coenobialis* records the penance for the loss of a chrismal thus, 'Qui oblitus fuerit chrismal, pergens procul ad opus aliquod, quinis quinquies percussioneibus. Si super terram in agro dimiserit, et invenerit statim, denis quinquies percussioneibus: si in ligno illud levaverit, ter denis, si ibi maneat nocte, suppositione'.<sup>596</sup> Following Ernst Kitzinger's and James Trilling's examination of the apotropaic qualities of interlace, it should be noted that every Insular house-shaped shrine except for Lough Erne (B) is decorated in some form of interlace.<sup>597</sup> While interlace is a basic component of the grammar of Insular ornament, there is also a connection between interlace and divine protection, perhaps most explicitly seen with how the Coppergate helmet's nose guard is decorated with interlace and an inscription immediately above it invoking both Christ

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<sup>595</sup> 'Vita sancti Comgalli abbatis de Bennchor' *Vitae Sanctorum Hiberniae*, vol. 2, 11.

<sup>596</sup> 'He who has forgotten the chrismal, having gone far away from some task, twenty-five strokes; if he leaves it on the ground in a field and finds it at once, fifty strokes; if he sets it up on a tree, thirty; if it remains there during the night, a special fast', translated by John T. McNeill and Helena M. Gamer, *Medieval Handbooks of Penance* (New York: Columbia University 1938), 260; Columbanus, *Regula coenobialis*, ed. J. P. Migne, vol. 80, *Patrologia Latina* (Paris: Garnier et Migne, 1863), Col.0217C-18A.

<sup>597</sup> Trilling, 'Medieval Interlace Ornament', 59-86; Kitzinger, 'Interlace and Icons', 3-15.

and the Holy Spirit [Figure 97]. One of the St Ninian Isle chapes also records an appeal to the Holy Spirit and incorporates spirals and hatching along with zoomorphic terminals [Figures 87.A-B].<sup>598</sup> In both cases, the Holy Spirit, Christ, or acknowledgement of the Trinity are evoked in the inscriptions as a protective means. While Insular house-shaped shrines do not exhibit protective inscriptions, when considering the importance of the *lorica* in Insular prayer and the portable nature of Insular house-shaped shrines, the concern over the loss of sacral matter, and the placement of three escutcheons in a triangular pattern both facing the viewer and in some cases touching or facing the handler of the shrine, the apotropaic function of ornament offers further explanatory insight into the functionality of the shrines, especially in relation to the decoration of ridgepoles in light of both the Cantic of Habakkuk and Bede's commentary on it.

Turning to the liturgical song itself, the Cantic of Habakkuk would have been well known to medieval monastic audiences.<sup>599</sup> Taken from Habakkuk 3:1–19, the cantic was sung on Friday mornings along with Psalm 90/91.<sup>600</sup> Éamonn Ó Carragáin's examination of the Ruthwell and Bewcastle crosses and a key passage of the cantic, 'in medio duorum animalium innotesceris', helped to begin the discussion of a now widely acknowledged motif.<sup>601</sup> Specifically, Éamonn Ó Carragáin discusses how the cantic's call to recognise Christ amongst or between two animals or living beings is mirrored in monumental sculpture, seen specifically

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<sup>598</sup> Webster, 'Encrypted Visions', 15.

<sup>599</sup> See, James Mearns, *The Canticles of the Christian Church: Eastern and Western, in Early and Medieval Times* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012).

<sup>600</sup> Blackwell, 'Iconography of the Hunterston Brooch and Related Medieval Material', 239.

<sup>601</sup> Éamonn Ó Carragáin, 'Christ over the Beasts and the Agnus Dei: Two Multivalent Panels on the Ruthwell and Bewcastle Crosses', in *Sources of Anglo-Saxon Culture*, ed. Paul E. Szarmach and Virginia Darrow Oggins (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, 1986), 377–403.

with a depiction of Christ on the Bewcastle cross, which depicts Him above two animals that also act as Christological markers by having their paws cross, thus creating a *chi* [Figure 98]. Other scholars also acknowledge that this specific phrasing, 'in medio duorum animalium', is not found in the Vulgate and that indeed Jerome's commentary on the canticle states that the more accurate version of the canticle follows the wording of the same prayer in the Vulgate. However, these scholars also acknowledge that Bede's commentary differs markedly from Jerome's; rather, it specifically chooses to explore the Transfiguration and the Trinity and keeps its focus on recognising Christ between two living things, or animals, as the term would have been understood at the time.<sup>602</sup>

Blackwell has, in turn, included ridgepoles with zoomorphic terminals in this discussion, and I agree that there is some connection between the canticle and the zoomorphic terminals; in following the visual analysis of other scholars, the motif of Christ between two beasts has become increasingly identifiable.<sup>603</sup> Still, it is worth noting that within the group of Insular house-shaped shrines, only one ridgepole explicitly depicts a human head between two zoomorphic terminals, while others are either devoid of ornamentation, depict knot-work, or display miniature shrine forms at their centres. While Bourke discusses the possible connection between these miniature shrines and both Insular architecture and conceptualisations of the Biblical Temple and Tabernacle, further addressed in the next chapter, Bede's commentary

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<sup>602</sup> Benedicta Ward, "'In medium duorum animalium': Bede and Jerome on the Cantic of Habakkuk", *Studia Patristica* 25 (1993): 190-1; A. T. Lucas, "'In the Middle of Two Living Things': Daniel or Christ?", in *Figures from the Past: Studies on Figurative Art in Christian Ireland*, ed. E Rynne (Dun Laoghaire: Glendale Press, 1987), 96; Richard N Bailey, 'In Medio Duorum Animalium: Habakkuk, the Ruthwell Cross and Bede's Life of St Cuthbert', in *Listen, O Isles, Unto Me: Studies in Medieval Word and Image in Honour of Jennifer O'Reilly*, ed. Elizabeth Mullins and Diarmuid Scully (Cork: Cork University Press, 2011), 248-9.

<sup>603</sup> Blackwell, 'Iconography of the Hunterston Brooch and Related Medieval Material', 240-1.



on the canticle still offers further and indeed deeper understandings of why the motifs may have been used on Insular house-shaped shrines.<sup>604</sup>

In many of these cases, the specific type of beast represented on the ridgepole is difficult to discern. Bird-like terminals appear on the ridgepoles of the Emly [Figure 9.A], Melhus [Figure 16.A], and Monymusk shrines [Figure 14.A], while the Bologna shrine's beast-head terminals include fins [Figure 23.A] and, on the figural ridgepole from the National Museum of Ireland [Figure 7.A], the beasts' tongues protrude out of their mouths. Birds-heads are also depicted on the suspension hinge of the Clonard shrine [Figure 3.B], while the surfaces of the Monymusk shrine [Figure 14.F] is covered in interlace beasts and the Moissac shrine's sides [Figure 25.C-E] are guarded by winged creatures. As previously noted, the Amiata shrine's animal-head ridgepole [Figure 20.A] terminals bear a strong resemblance to the 'Pictish beast', like that seen on the left-side face of the Pictish cross-slab Meigle No. 5 [Figure 21]. Overall, the zoomorphic ornament found on Insular house-shaped shrines may not directly allude to specific animals but instead may speak to larger associations.

After Bede explains that the living beings mentioned in the canticle could be Moses and Elijah, a reference to the Transfiguration, he describes the vision of Christ shining like the sun, 'Ibi innotescebat quia resurrecturus esset, et immortalis futurus clarificato vultu eius instar solis, et vestimentis eius nitentibus in similitudinem nivis. Ibi innotescebat quia filius dei erat, dicente ad eum de caelis voce paterna: Hic est

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<sup>604</sup> Cormac Bourke, 'The Book of Kells: New Light on the Temptation Scene', in *From Ireland Coming: Irish Art from the Early Christian to the Late Gothic Period and its European Context*, ed. Colum Hourihane (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), 49-59.

filius meus dilectus, in quo mihi bene complacui, ipsum audite'.<sup>605</sup> Here Bede directly connects the canticle to the miraculous light emanating from Christ during the Transfiguration. Not only does the material evidence of house-shaped shrines show that they were constructed with highly reflective materials, but Aldhelm's riddle on the chrismal also describes the chrismal, as well as its contents, as shining like Christ,

et licet exterius rutilent de corpore gemmae,  
aurea dum fulvis flavescit bulla metallis,  
sed tamen uberius ditantur viscera crassa  
intus, qua species flagrat pulcherrima Christi  
candida sanctarum sic floret gloria rerum.<sup>606</sup>

Within Aldhelm's riddle, we can see how the status of the shrine takes on the qualities of its contents, which, due to their holy state, shine with a spiritual light just as the exterior of the shrine reflects earthly light. The beasts of Insular house-shaped shrines are themselves bright and shining, thereby signalling to the viewer the presence of the divine.

Delving deeper into Bede's commentary, the chest as seat of knowledge may have deeper spiritual meanings vis-à-vis the wearing of Insular house-shaped shrines around the neck, 'Ventrem suum more prophetis consueto animum suum dicit, quia sicut ventre recipiuntur cibi, quibus virtus ac vita corporis reficiatur, ita cogitationes

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<sup>605</sup> 'It was there it became known that he was to be raised up again and be immortal, when his countenance became bright like the sun and his garments white like snow. It was there it became known that he was the Son of God, when the voice of his Father from the heavens said to him: this is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; listen to him', translation in *Bede On Tobit and On the Canticle of Habakkuk*, trans. Seán Connolly (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 1997), 68; Bede Venerabilis, *Expositio in canticum Abacuc prophetae*, ed. J. E. Hudson, vol. 119B, Corpus Christianorum Series Latina (Turnhout: Brepols Publishers, 1983), Line: 65-6.

<sup>606</sup> 'And granted, there are precious stones glowing red on the outside of my body, while a golden boss shines with precious metalwork, but nevertheless within more abundantly enriched is my crude viscera, which blazes with the more beautiful species of Christ: thus I am filled with these shining holy things'  
Aldhelmus Scireburnensis, *Aenigmata*, 133, Enigma: 55.

pie sancto recipiuntur in animo, quibus interioris hominis vita, ne deficere debeat, sustentetur et contineatur'.<sup>607</sup> Considering the decoration found on the back of some Insular house-shaped shrines, these may have carried some apotropaic power or spiritual message, which was expressed in the triangular placement of their ornament set in close proximity to the chest of their keepers. Indeed, Bede further explains the protective qualities,

Christos autem omnes electos dicit, qui ab unctione gratiae spiritalis rectissime hoc vocabulo nuncupantur; unde est illud psalmistae de his qui sanctis nocere volentes, divina sunt, prohibitione coerciti: Et corripuit pro eis reges, nolite tangere christos meos. Salvos autem fecit christos suos, non quos christos invenit, sed quos egrediendo a patre et in carne apparendo per adoptionis spiritum christos, id est unctos suos fecit.<sup>608</sup>

Here Bede alludes to the apostolic tradition started by Christ, which would have been intimately familiar for itinerant clergy or those responsible for the protection of containers of sacral matter. In like manner, the keepers of these sacral containers may even have trusted in their spiritual and literal salvific power as described in the Insular hagiography previously discussed. In considering other passages of Bede's commentary, the physicality of Insular house-shaped shrines can be further understood within their cultural context beyond just the call to recognise Christ between two living things.

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<sup>607</sup> 'by his belly he means his mind in the manner customary with the prophets, because just as food is taken into the belly to reinvigorate the body's strength and vitality, devout considerations are taken into the mind for sustenance and maintenance of one's interior life lest it grow weak', translation in *Bede On Tobit and On the Canticle of Habakkuk*, 88; Bede Venerabilis, *Expositio in canticum Abacuc prophetae*, 119B, Line: 578.

<sup>608</sup> 'He terms 'anointed' all the elect who are quite rightly called by this name in virtue of the anointing of the grace of the Spirit. Hence the saying of the psalmists about those wishing to harm the saints being restrained by the prohibition of God: and he rebuked kings on their account: 'Touch not my anointed ones.' Now he saved his 'anointed ones', not those whom he found to be 'anointed', but whom by going forth from the Father and appearing in the flesh, he made 'anointed', i.e. his own anointed through the spirit of adoption', translation in *Bede On Tobit and On the Canticle of Habakkuk*, 84; *Expositio in canticum Abacuc prophetae*, 119B, Line: 481. This topic will be explored in further depth in chapter five.

## Conclusion

The ornament, materials, and indeed some aspects of Insular house-shaped shrine construction show a connection to Continental traditions of displaying and containing sacral matter, although translated into Insular aesthetics and constructed differently due to the availability of materials and divergent functions. Regarding materiality, the use of precious metals, gemstones, and glass can all be linked to established hierarchies of materials and the spiritual messages that they could embody. The extraction of impurities from base metals served as the basis for a metaphorical engagement with metals as symbols of spiritual purification. At the top of this hierarchy, gold was afforded the highest place due to being a nonreactive metal, preserving it from rust or tarnish, which was in turn used to signify spiritual purity; silver was related to spiritual eloquence and the saints due to its brilliance and reflective qualities, whereby it reflected the Light of God unto his people. Still, noticeable differences exhibited within the group of Insular house-shaped shrines underline ways in which these shrines diverge. Notably, the use of tinning may reflect the availability of materials within the period, but at the same time, the materiality of tinned bronze within Irish literature shows that, while not composed of silver or gold, it still ranked higher than plain copper alloys. Tinning helped to transform copper into a much more reflective surface, with the added benefit of protecting the substrate from corrosion. Exegetical writings also demonstrate that the allegorical meaning of similar reflective and coloured materials was linked to the light of God and divine revelation.

Moreover, the use of zoomorphic terminals, flanking beasts, and even the placement of decorative mounts in triangular patterns could not only refer to the

primacy of the Trinity in Insular writings but also to its apotropaic power. Likewise, the appearance of vines, deer, and chalices does not necessarily equate to singular, functional readings of containers and their ornament. As containers for sacral matter, their protection from corruption but also from loss or theft would have been key concerns given their portability. The overall materiality of Insular house-shaped shrines appears to align the containers, collectively speaking, more with visions of the heavenly Church; indeed, the frequency of figural iconography is low and appears almost exclusively on shrines with Anglo-Saxon provenances. As the next chapter explores further, Insular architecture and writings on the earthly and heavenly Temple offer deeper insights into Insular house-shaped shrines.

## Chapter 5

### Points Between Earth and Heaven: The Interdependence of the Temple, Church, Tomb, and Shrine as Symbolic Containers for the Sacred

When discussing the growing number of Insular house-shaped shrines, Anderson described the group as an entire class of shrines which were, ‘architecturally shaped...and fashioned in imitation of the form which the Celtic artists who illuminated the Book of Kells evolved from his imagination as a representation of the Temple of Jerusalem’.<sup>609</sup> While the Book of Kells does not predate Insular house-shaped shrines, other scholars such as Peter Harbison have further noted the similarity between Insular house-shaped shrines and comparable forms in the capstones of Irish High Crosses.<sup>610</sup> As was shown in chapter one, there is a conceptual slippage between the terms *house*, *temple*, and *church* and their Latin equivalents. As will be shown in this chapter, this slippage is also seen in the early literature, language, and material evidence of Insular culture; this slippage is inextricable, complex, and nuanced, resting in the relationship between the terms and concepts for *house*, *temple*, and *church*. To an extent, this is evident in some scholarship on the image of the Temple in the Book of Kells, where publications variously refer to the structure depicted on the Temptation page [Figure 30] as a temple, tabernacle, shrine, church, and reliquary—as well as the body of Christ.<sup>611</sup>

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<sup>609</sup> Anderson, 'Architecturally Shaped Shrines', 259.

<sup>610</sup> Peter Harbison, 'Early Irish Reliquary-Shrines in Bronze and Stone', *Würzburger Diözesangeschichtsblätter* 51 (1989): 37-50.

<sup>611</sup> Bourke, 'New Light on the Temptation Scene', 49-59; Peter Harbison, 'Three Miniatures in the Book of Kells', *Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy. Section C: Archaeology, Celtic Studies, History, Linguistics, Literature* 85C (1985): 181-94; Soderberg, 'Lost Cultural Exchange', 161-3.

While scholars such as Carol Farr and Jennifer O'Reilly have identified the complex relationship of the structures and concepts in relation to the Kell's page, many scholars do not.<sup>612</sup>

As will be shown, the spiritual messages related to the architectural shape of Insular house-shaped shrines connected them not only to physical churches but also to the Temple, Tabernacle, Christ, and the Heavenly Jerusalem. The first section of this chapter questions how the Temple as depicted in the Book of Kells might match Insular house-shaped shrines in their use of trapezoidal lids, zoomorphic ridgepoles, and even hinged suspension straps, while also examining if there are any further architectural motifs imbedded in the design and ornamentation of Insular house-shaped shrines. The second section examines the church- or shrine-shaped capstones of Irish High Crosses to question the religious significance of architecturally shaped sacral containers and if the ornamentation of these capstones can help elucidate similar motifs on Insular house-shaped shrines. Having discussed other architecturally shaped sculptures and artefacts, the third section examines potential depictions of Insular house-shaped shrines to question not only how we can imagine by what means people physically interacted with these shrines, but also how the heart and chest might relate to understanding the spiritual message of the Church and its apostolic message. Finally, this chapter ends with a discussion on how the interior spaces of Insular churches may have been conceptualised as both literal and symbolic locations, while noting potential connections that may have been drawn between these spaces and Insular house-shaped shrines.

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<sup>612</sup> Carol Farr, 'Liturgical Influences on the Decoration of the Book of Kells', in *Studies in Insular Art and Archaeology*, ed. Catherine E. Karkov and Robert T. Farrell (Oxford: American Early Medieval Studies and the Miami University School of Fine Arts, 1991), 127-41; O'Reilly, 'Mystery Revealed and Yet Concealed', 106-14.

## Imagining the Temple of Jerusalem

At their most basic two-dimensional renderings, buildings could be depicted by placing entrances and or windows onto a square or rectangular shape, which in turn is topped by a triangular or trapezoidal roof. While the same abstraction of architectural space could depict any building or structure, as discussed in the previous chapter in regard to ornament, the context of these abstracted buildings informs the viewer that they are not just any architectural space, but are churches or even the Temple. Depicting architecture in abstracted forms was a prevalent means of symbolically representing *loca sancta* throughout the late-antique and early medieval periods.<sup>613</sup> This stylisation can be seen with a fourth-century piece of Roman gilt glass that depicts a highly stylised Temple of Jerusalem, which is identified by an inscription in Greek that refers to the structure as the ‘House of Peace’ [Figure 99].<sup>614</sup> Similar stylised structures are found on *ampullae*, such as those which form an extensive collection held at Bobbio, which I have chosen to highlight due to the Insular house-shaped shrine also discovered at the abbey. In the Bobbio collection, one sixth-century *ampulla* from the Holy Land, said to have been donated by the Lombard Queen Theodolinda, depicts the Women at the Empty Tomb [Figure 100]. Two figures stand to the left of a stylised depiction of the Holy

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<sup>613</sup> Scholars argue that ‘micro-architecture’ in Gothic art posits many of the same ideas about the use of architectural motifs. For more see, Achim Timmermann, ‘Microarchitecture and Mystical Death: The Font Ciborium of St Mary’s in Luton (circa 1330-40)’, in *The Year 1300 and the Creation of a New European Architecture*, ed. Alexandra Gajewski and Zoe Opacic (Turnhout: Brepols Publishers, 2008), 133-42; Edmund Thomas, ‘“Houses of the Dead”? Columnar Sarcophagi as ‘Micro-Architecture’’, in *In Life, Death and Representation: Some New Work on Roman Sarcophagi*, ed. Jas Elsner and Janet Huskinson (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2011), 387-435; Sally J. Cornelison, ‘Art Imitates Architecture: The Saint Philip Reliquary in Renaissance Florence’, *The Art Bulletin* 86, no. 4 (2004): 642-58; François Bucher, ‘Micro-Architecture as the ‘Idea’ of Gothic Theory and Style’, *Gesta* 15 (1976): 71-89.

<sup>614</sup> Honora Howell Chapman, ‘What Josephus Sees: The Temple of Peace and the Jerusalem Temple as Spectacle in Text and Art’, *Phoenix* 63 (2009): 117-26.



Sepulchre, while on the right an angel greets the women.<sup>615</sup> While vastly different structures, the simplified architectural motifs can be read in their iconographic and material contexts; indeed, these same contexts are what imbues these renderings with their specific meanings.

By abstracting the Temple as well as referential ecclesiastical architecture, the artists could transform its complex three-dimensional space into a deeply symbolic and accessible image. One example of this deeply symbolic abstraction can be found in Carol Neuman de Vegvar's examination of Insular canon table arcades, 'it is striking that the system of arcades that frame the canon tables in Insular manuscripts often reiterate the numbers of intercolumniations that are found in the sacred core of the Holy Sepulchre complex, the three of the façade of the Edicule and the four of the Anastasis Rotunda system' [Figures 101-2].<sup>616</sup> While this repetition of columns may link some canon tables to Byzantine architecture, so too did it connect these depictions to the Temple of Jerusalem, as the plan and measurements of the Holy Sepulchre mirrored that of the Temple.<sup>617</sup> O'Reilly describes the thought process that would have linked these two structures as an 'alien thought-world of the free but not arbitrary association of ideas', and indeed similar arguments about the use of architectural motifs to allude to places, historic and contemporary, spiritual

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<sup>615</sup> Alžběta Filipová, 'The Memory of Monza's Holy Land Ampullae; From Reliquary to Relic, or There and Back Again', in *Objects of Memory, Memory of Objects. The Artworks as a Vehicle of the Past in the Middle Ages*, ed. Alžběta Filipová, Zuzana Frantová, and Francesco Lovino (Brno: Masarykova univerzita, 2014), 16-7; Heather Hunter-Crawley, 'Pilgrimage Made Portable: A Sensory Archaeology of the Monza-Bobbio Ampullae', *HEROM* 1, no. 1 (2012): 136-9.

<sup>616</sup> Carol Neuman de Vegvar, 'Remembering Jerusalem: Architecture and Meaning in Insular Canon Table Arcades', in *Moss, Making and Meaning in Insular Art*, ed. Rachel Moss (Dublin: Four Courts Press), 251.

<sup>617</sup> Robert Ousterhout, 'The Temple, the Sepulchre, and the Martyrion of the Savior', *Gesta* 29 (1990): 47-50.

and earthly, appear in discussions on the Gospels as sacred place and in research on monumental sculpture as alternatives to pilgrimage.<sup>618</sup>

Insular canon tables, therefore, provide an example of the artistic reimagining of historical and metaphorical space, which is also useful in helping elucidate how small portable shrines could have evoked images of both local architecture and the Temple of Jerusalem. Carl Nordenfalk notes that the canon tables present ‘an impressive atrium at the entrance of the sacred text itself’, while Michelle Brown further discusses the similarities between the *Crux gemmata*, or jewelled-cross, and Insular carpet pages, these being whole-page illuminations at the beginning of some Insular Gospels that may have served as apotropaic devices and were deeply rooted in the *lectio divina* tradition, thus visually signalling the sacred textual space the reader is about to enter [Figure 103].<sup>619</sup> Likewise, Dorothy Verkerk notes the interest in replicating biblical sacred space within the local can be seen in monumental sculpture,

as all saints’ *vitae* indicate, there was an indigenous desire to create a Rome in Ireland, bridging temporal and geographical barriers. Just as sculptural images defined the Irish experiences of Rome’s relics, the re-creation of these symbolic structure was eminently suited to the local traditions of carving and the special Irish veneration of the cross.<sup>620</sup>

Indeed, depictions of relics, shrines, and the ‘insignia of the ecclesiastical’ are found across Insular monumental sculptures.<sup>621</sup>

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<sup>618</sup> O’Reilly, ‘Mystery Revealed and Yet Concealed’, 110; Dorothy Hoogland Verkerk, ‘Pilgrimage ad limina apostolorum in Rome: Irish Crosses and Early Christian Sarcophagi’, in *From Ireland Coming: Irish Art from the Early Christian to the Late Gothic Period and its European Context*, ed. Colum Hourihane (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), 9-26.

<sup>619</sup> Carl Adam Johan Nordenfalk, *Studies in the History of Book Illumination* (London: Pindar Press, 1992), 16; Michelle P. Brown, ‘The Book as Sacred Space’, in *Sacred Space: House of God, Gate of Heaven*, ed. Philip North and John North (London: Continuum, 2007), 52-4; Janina Ramirez, ‘Sub culmine gazas: The Iconography of the Armarium on the Ezra Page of the Codex Amiatinus’, *Gesta* 48 (2009): 10-1.

<sup>620</sup> Verkerk, ‘Irish Crosses and Early Christian Sarcophagi’, 23.

<sup>621</sup> Bourke, ‘Early Irish Hand-Bells’, 58.

For over one hundred years, Insular house-shaped shrines have been compared to the Temple as depicted on the Temptation of Christ page of the Book of Kells, Trinity College, MS 58, fol. 202v [Figure 30].<sup>622</sup> On the folio itself, Christ is seen standing or perhaps rising behind a structure with a hip-shaped roof, which is decorated with animal-head finials. Kirk Ambrose identifies the structure as the Temple but instead focuses on the figure at the base or ‘door’ of the Temple.<sup>623</sup> Farr’s study of the iconography of the Temptation page cites Augustine’s commentary on Psalm 90 with the ‘figure of ‘Christ the Head and His Body the Church’’, and argues that Christ is being compositionally combined or aligned with the Temple.<sup>624</sup> While Farr is interested in the connection between this illumination and Lenten fasting, O’Reilly focuses on the genealogy and baptism of Christ.<sup>625</sup> Harbison argues that the illumination on fol. 202v in the Book of Kells depicts the scene of Christ standing on the Temple of Jerusalem as described in Luke 4:9–12.<sup>626</sup> Bourke provides further insights in his examination of a white vertical rectangle seen directly under the Temple, which he interprets as potentially referencing an empty table, ‘when perceived as a *horizontal* rather than as a vertical, the panel declares itself to be a table, and the two groups of thirteen sit (or stand) to either side’.<sup>627</sup> While research on the Temptation page is extensive, new insights are possible, especially in examining the illumination’s relationship to both Insular house-shaped shrines and conceptualisations of ecclesiastical spaces and tomb-shrines.

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<sup>622</sup> Anderson, 'Architecturally Shaped Shrines', 259-81.

<sup>623</sup> Kirk Ambrose, 'The Sense of Sight in the Book of Kells', *Source: Notes in the History of Art* 27, no. 1 (2007): 1-9.

<sup>624</sup> Farr, 'Liturgical Influences on the Decoration of the Book of Kells', 134.

<sup>625</sup> Jennifer O’Reilly, 'Exegesis and the Book of Kells: The Lucan Genealogy', in *The Book of Kells*, ed. Felicity O’Mahony (Aldershot: Scolar, 1992), 360-2.

<sup>626</sup> Harbison, 'Three Miniatures in the Book of Kells', 186-9.

<sup>627</sup> Bourke, 'New Light on the Temptation Scene', 51.

As the structure depicted on the Temptation page of the Book of Kells would need to be understood as a religious building for the narrative to be understood, it follows that it might mirror local architecture in some way. Radford and Tomás Ó Carragáin suggest that earlier wooden churches, which would have been contemporary with the construction of Insular house-shaped shrines and the Book of Kells, may have been constructed with hip-shaped roofs [Figure 104].<sup>628</sup> Given that the archaeological remains of the earliest wooden churches primarily consist of their stake holes, we must instead turn to the later stone churches and Insular textual sources to more fully understand the composition of the Temptation page of the Book of Kells, Insular architecture, and house-shaped shrines. Indeed, Tomás Ó Carragáin, Peter Harbison, Jenny Marshall, and Grellan Rourke all discuss how Insular stone churches and oratories were constructed with either rounded or flat gable-roof ends and not the hip-roofs seen on Insular house-shaped shrines [Figures 105-7].<sup>629</sup> Tomás Ó Carragáin, in his 2009 study, documents approximately ‘180 pre-Romanesque churches [that] survive in Ireland’; of these, thirty-six are ‘drystone churches with corbelled roofs of Gallarus-type, some of which are as early as the 8<sup>th</sup> century’ while others are mortared and are constructed with gable-roofs, which were sometimes decorated with finials [Figure 108].<sup>630</sup> Additionally, all surviving pre-Romanesque churches in Ireland are unicameral and shortly proportioned (1:1.56 on average), usually with a single western doorway and two small windows, one facing

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<sup>628</sup> Radford, 'Irish Church', 7-8; Ó Carragáin, *Churches in Early Medieval Ireland*, 24.

<sup>629</sup> *Churches in Early Medieval Ireland*, 15-47; Peter Harbison, 'How Old is Gallarus Oratory? A Reappraisal of its Role in Early Irish Architecture', *Medieval Archaeology* 14, no. 1 (1970): 34-43; Grellan Rourke and Jenny Marshall, 'The Drystone Oratories of Western Kerry', in *Illaunloughan Island: An Early Medieval Monastery in Co. Kerry*, ed. Jenny Marshall, et al. (Bray: Wordwell, 2005), 112-21.

<sup>630</sup> Tomás Ó Carragáin, 'The Architectural Setting of the Mass in Early-medieval Ireland', *Medieval Archaeology* 53 (2009): 119.

south and the other east.<sup>631</sup> The average size of these churches is approximately 60 square metres, although sites can range from 40 to 200 square metres with larger cathedrals.<sup>632</sup> These averages are also found amongst the naves of tenth- and eleventh-century ‘proto-parish’ churches in England.<sup>633</sup>

As Tomás Ó Carragáin observes, the earliest and simplest of single-cell churches in Ireland were constructed with only one doorway, westerly facing, while windows on the northern and southern walls helped to illuminate the interior.<sup>634</sup> Notably, when returning to the Temptation page, a figure can be seen standing within a frame in the centre of the building [Figure 30]. While previous scholars have described this figure as guarding the entrance into the church-space, or indeed as a stand-in for the importance of the sense of Sight in both receiving and perceiving divine visions, I would instead like to question what direction we are to assume the figure is facing.<sup>635</sup> Given that the simplification of architectural space can be seen in art from across Europe, from mosaics in Rome depicting Pope Paschal I presenting a miniature church to Christ, to illuminations such as King Æthelstan’s presentation of a book to St Cuthbert, to representations of the Temple in the Utrecht Psalter, Utrecht Universiteitsbibliotheek, MS Bibl. Rhenotraiectinae I Nr 32, fol. 77v, and the Stuttgart Psalter, Württembergische Landesbibliothek, Cod.Bibl.fol.23, fol. 118v, [Figure 109-12], the depiction of the Temple in the Book of Kells could be

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<sup>631</sup> Ibid.

<sup>632</sup> Ibid., 119-20.

<sup>633</sup> Richard K. Morris, *Churches in the Landscape* (London: Phoenix Giant, 1997), 287.

<sup>634</sup> Early seventh- to tenth-century single cell Anglo-Saxon churches follow a similar construction, H. M. Taylor and Joan Taylor, *Anglo-Saxon Architecture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1965), 1-15; Helen Gittos, *Liturgy, Architecture, and Sacred Places in Anglo-Saxon England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 146-69.

<sup>635</sup> Ambrose, ‘The Sense of Sight in the Book of Kells’, 1-9; Meg Boulton, ‘The End of the World as We Know It’: The Eschatology of Symbolic Space/s in Insular Art’, in *Making Histories: Proceedings from the Sixth International Insular Arts Conference*, ed. Jane Hawkes (Donington: Shaun Tyas Publishing, 2013), 279-90.

represented from multiple perspectives simultaneously; thus the front of the Temple is in fact the western wall and the viewer is ‘facing’ towards the east, while the roof is depicted from the south.<sup>636</sup> In this sense, the long horizontal front panels of Insular house-shaped shrines also mark the location where entry into their interiors is possible. Perhaps this may simply be a prosaic reality that, after unlocking the shrines, the lid would mechanically swing open and items could be removed or added to the shrine here.

Like the majority of Insular and indeed medieval art, the image of the Temple in the Book of Kells is likely multivalent in its function. The figure presented at the centre of the building could be a further allusion to the centrally placed altars in some early medieval churches as attested to in contemporary sources such as the eighth-century poem *De Oratorio* in the collection of *Hisperica famina*. The poem reads,

Hoc arboreum candelatis plasmatum est oratorium tabulis,  
 Gemellis conserta biiug[u]is artat latera;  
 Quandrigona edicti stabilitant fundamenta templi,  
 Quis densum globoso munimine cruit tabulatum,  
 Supernam compaginat cameram,  
 Quadrigona comptis plextra sunt sita tectis.  
 Ageam copulat in gremio aram,  
 Cui collecti cerimoniant vates missam.  
 Unicum ab occiduo limite amplicitur ostium,  
 Quoq[ue] arborea strictis fortis cluditur regia.  
 Extensum tabulosa stipat porticum collectura,  
 Quaternas summon nectit pinnas.

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<sup>636</sup> For more on these manuscripts see, Judson Emerick, 'Altars Personified: The Cult of the Saints and the Chapel System in Pope Paschal I's S. Prassede (817-819)', in *Archaeology in Architecture: Studies in Honor of Cecil L. Striker*, ed. Judson Emerick and Deborah Mauskopf Deliyannis (Mainz am Rhein: von Zabern, 2005), 43-63; Veronica Ortenberg, 'The King from Overseas: Why Did Æthelstan Matter in Tenth-Century Continental Affairs?', in *England and the Continent in the Tenth Century: Studies in Honour of Wilhelm Levison*, ed. David Rollason, Conrad Leyser, and Williams Williams (Turnhout: Brepols Publishers, 2010), 211-36; Carole E. Newlands, 'Bede and Images of Saint Cuthbert', *Traditio* 52 (1997): 73-109; Koert van der Horst, 'The Utrecht Psalter: Picturing the Psalms of David', in *The Utrecht Psalter in Medieval Art: Picturing the Psalms of David*, ed. Koert van der Horst, William Noel, and Wilhelmina C.M. Wüstefeld ('t Goy: HES Publishers BV, 1996), 55-65; Bertrand M. Maurice Davezac, 'The Stuttgart Psalter: Its Pre-Carolingian Sources and its Place in Carolingian Art' (Phd diss., Columbia University, 1971), 179-84.

Innumera congellat plasmamina,  
Quae non loqueloſo explicare famulor turno.<sup>637</sup>

Notably, Niall Brady has drawn attention to the ſpecific word-choice of *gremium* to deſcribe the ſetting of the altar. Rather than connoting ſimply a geometric location, the Latin word carries with it further meanings ſuch as ‘heart’ or ‘womb’.<sup>638</sup> In this ſenſe, the figure at the portal in the Book of Kells not only guards an entrance into the church or Temple, but ſimultaneously guards its ſpiritual heart. This bodily treatment of churches is further utilised in Aldhelm’s poem on the chrismal which deſcribes its interior as viscera. Indeed, juſt as the figure in the Book of Kells may be guarding an access point into the Temple, ſo too may the non-figural ornamentation on Inſular houſe-shaped ſhrines guard or even ſignal to the viewer the entrance to its contents.

Additionally, it is important to note that an entrance on the western wall, while a potential reading of the Temple image in the Book of Kells, would be at odds with the deſcription of the Temple in 1 Kings 6:8, ‘ostium lateris medii in parte erat domus dexteræ et per cocleam ascendebant in medium cenaculum et a medio in tertium’.<sup>639</sup> While ſeparated by both centuries and physical ſpace, the depiction of the Temple in a Gospel book from the monastery of Abba Garima, Ethiopia, which

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<sup>637</sup> ‘The wooden oratory is fashioned out of candle-shaped beams; it has ſides joined with four-fold faſtenings; the ſquare foundations of the ſaid temple give it ſtability, from which ſprings a ſolid beam work of maſſive enclosure; it has a vaulted roof above; ſquared beams are placed in the ornamented roof. It had a holy altar in the centre, on which the aſſembled prieſts celebrate the Maſs. It has a ſingle entrance from the western boundary, which is closed by a wooden door that ſeals the warmth. An aſſembly of planks comprises the extenſive portico; there are four ſteeples at the top. The chapel contains innumerable objects, which I ſhall not ſtruggle to unroll from my wheel of words’, translation in Niall Brady, ‘Hisperica famina and Church Building’, *Peritia* 11 (1997): 328.

<sup>638</sup> See alſo the deſcription of a church in Cogitosus’s *vita* on St Brigit, Sean Connolly and J. M. Picard, ‘Cogitosus’s “Life of St Brigit” Content and Value’, *The Journal of the Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland* 117 (1987): 25-7; Brady, ‘Hisperica famina and Church Building’, 330.

<sup>639</sup> ‘The door entrance was on the right ſide of the building in the middle, and through a winding ſtairs they aſcended to the middle level and from there the third’, Hieronymus, *Biblia ſacra iuxta Vulgatam versionem*, Chapter 6, Verſe: 8.

was made in Syria sometime in the sixth century [Figure 113], is markedly similar to that depicted in the Book of Kells, albeit with the addition of a stairway leading up to the Temple.<sup>640</sup> With this illumination in mind, the depiction of the Temple in the Book of Kells may instead be depicting this southern entrance. Moreover, Bede discusses the spiritual implications of the south-facing door of the Temple thus, ‘Et bene in parte domus dextrae quia dextrum eius latus a milite apertum sancta credit ecclesia. Ubi et apto verbo usus evangelista ut non diceret, percussit latus eius aut vulneravit, sed aperuit videlicet quasi ostium lateris medii per quod nobis iter ad caelestia panderetur’.<sup>641</sup> Indeed, with the figure of Christ presented above the Temple in the Book of Kells, the figure in the portal both guards the entrance and could potentially be alerting the viewer to deeper spiritual messages imbedded both into the image and in the exegesis surrounding the Temple. While the Temple as depicted in the Book of Kells offers insights, it is neither an objective illustration of architectural reality nor even a vision based solely on Biblical imagery. Instead, it offers a symbol, one which appears to be based in part on Insular house-shaped shrine construction and ornamentation.

Because of the tendency to portray a stylised or simplified Temple, it follows that some architectural motifs depicted within the context of Insular art may relate to both physical and local architecture along with wider, more allegorical or historical allusions; when read within their ecclesiastical contexts, Insular house-shaped

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<sup>640</sup> Herbert L. Kessler, 'The Word Made Flesh in Early Decorated Bibles', in *Picturing the Bible: The Earliest Christian Art*, ed. Jeffrey Spier (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007), 142-4.

<sup>641</sup> ‘And aptly (does it say) on the right hand of the house because the holy Church believes his right side was opened by the soldier. Here too the evangelist used the appropriate word when instead of saying he struck or wounded his side, said opened, that is to say, as it were, the door of the middle side through which a path to heavenly things might be thrown open to us’, translation in *Bede: On the Temple*, trans. Seán Connolly (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1995), 29; Bede Venerabilis, *De templo libri ii*, ed. D. Hurst, vol. 119A, Corpus Christianorum Series Latina (Turnhout: Brepols Publishers, 1969), Book: 1, Line: 745.



shrines are not simply allusions to any building but specifically referenced the Temple, which in turn included churches. The similarity between the Temple as depicted in the Book of Kells and Insular house-shaped shrines consists of more than their similar hip-roofs and zoomorphic terminals. Tomás Ó Carragáin describes the two poles or beams that appear to support the sides of the Temple in the Book of Kells as buttresses (*destinae*), citing Bede's *ecclesiasticam getis anglorum*, which records the death of Aidan thus, 'Tetenderunt ergo ei aegrotanti tentorium ad occidentalem ecclesiae partem, ita ut ipsum tentorium parieti haereret ecclesiae; unde factum est, ut acclinis destinae, quae extrinsecus ecclesiae pro munimine erat apposita, spiritum vitae exhalaret ultimum'.<sup>642</sup> Bede goes on to describe how the same buttress was later preserved as a relic, and Tomás Ó Carragáin suggests the positioning of the *destinae* on the west end of the church indicates that the 'side wall did not counteract the entire outward thrust of the roof'; this, in turn, raises the likelihood that the church Bede describes was constructed with a hipped roof.<sup>643</sup> In comparison, when Insular house-shaped shrines are set down on a surface and prepared to be opened, their suspension fittings rest pointing down at their sides, which in turn mirrors these beams, poles, or buttresses as depicted on the Temple of the Book of Kells [Figures 30, 114], offering another as yet unmentioned similarity. While the image of the Temple on the Temptation page was likely multivalent and multifunctional, its core or base meaning was the Temple of Jerusalem and through this a connection with both the earthly and heavenly Church. As the illumination in

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<sup>642</sup> 'When he was sick they set up a tent for him close to the wall at the west end of the church, by means it happened that he gave up the ghost, leaning against a post that was on the outside to strengthen the wall', *Historia ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum*, 1375, Book: 3, Chapter: 17, Page: 92, Line: 8.

<sup>643</sup> Ó Carragáin, *Churches in Early Medieval Ireland*, 25-6.

the Book of Kells postdates the earliest date ascribed to Insular house-shaped shrines, if it is depicting the Temple-as-church-as-shrine, then it is doing so as a reaction to Insular house-shaped shrines; still, this would further strengthen interpreting Insular house-shaped shrines as stylised references to ecclesiastical architecture.

This architectural reading is important when considering other possible prototypes or influences on the form of Insular house-shaped shrines and the use of a similar silhouette for the Temple in the Book of Kells. Indeed, both the Temple as depicted on fol. 202v and Insular house-shaped shrines may not only be references to Insular churches, but also tombs. As Ó Floinn suggests, the average proportion of Insular house-shaped shrines, ‘a length : width ratio of 2 or 2.5:1’, alludes to tombs or sarcophagi.<sup>644</sup> A similar sentiment was expressed by Blackwell when she describes the varying interpretations presented for the Monymusk shrine, ‘others have argued that the shrines allude neither to the shape of churches nor houses, but resemble larger stone tombs or sarcophagi—themselves perhaps modelled on the shape of a house for the dead’.<sup>645</sup> However, surviving Insular sarcophagi from Govan, Wirksworth, and St Alkmund exhibit longer forms than Insular house-shaped shrines, while some Continental sarcophagi, such as the tomb of Abbess Theodechilde, were constructed with a slanted roof [Figures 115-8].<sup>646</sup> While this list of sarcophagi is not exhaustive, it does point to the very real differences between some Insular sarcophagi and house-shaped shrines; Insular house-shaped shrines

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<sup>644</sup> Ó Floinn, ‘House-Shaped Shrine from Clonard’, 54.

<sup>645</sup> Blackwell, ‘Individuals’, 35.

<sup>646</sup> R. M. Spearman, ‘The Govan Sarcophagus: An Enigmatic Monument’, in *Govan and its Early Medieval Sculpture*, ed. Anna Ritchie (Stroud: Alan Sutton, 1994), 34-6; Betty Kurth, ‘The Iconography of the Wirksworth Slab’, *The Burlington Magazine for Connoisseurs* 86, no. 506 (1945): 114; C. A. Raleigh Radford, ‘The Church of St. Alkmund, Derby’, *Derbyshire Archaeological Journal* 96 (1976), 26-61; Charles B. McClendon, *The Origins of Medieval Architecture: Buildings in Europe A.D. 600-900* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005), 45-7.

were all constructed with hip-roofs and their length-to-width ratios can range from approximately 2:1 as with the Shannon shrine (11 x 5.5 cm) to 3.03:1 as seen with the Clonmore shrine (8.2 x 2.7 cm) [Figure 119]. Moreover, a church or church-shaped tomb could encapsulate wider themes than a sarcophagus. For example, when Bede speaks about a tomb-shrine in *Historiam ecclesiastica*, he describes it as shaped like a small house or church (*domus*), ‘Est autem locus idem sepulchri tumba lignea in modum domunculi facta coopertus’, thereby aligning the structure with the sacred space of the church, as the tomb, like the church, contained holy material, in this case the body of St Chad.<sup>647</sup>

While Bede’s description of the tomb could be used to suggest that the form of Insular house-shaped shrines may have derived from mortuary art, it is important to note that the forms used in tomb-shrines alluded to the architecture of the church and the structure of the altar. Tomb-shrines can be described briefly as purpose-built structures associated with the bodies of saints, which helped to provide ‘focus for ritual and [are] therefore found in prominent position in Early Christian hermitage and monasteries’.<sup>648</sup> As such, they are *tombs* inasmuch that they house, contain, or cover the saint’s body or relics, and they are *shrines* in that they alert and direct the veneration of the viewer. These structures can take the form of A-shaped tombs to small composite boxes or altars, architecturally shaped recumbent monuments, and

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<sup>647</sup> ‘Now in the same place a covered tomb of wood, like a little house, was made’, Beda Venerabilis, *Historia ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum*, 1375, Book: 4, Chapter: 3, Page: 218, Line: 11.

<sup>648</sup> Michael Herity, ‘The Forms of the Tomb-Shrine of the Founder Saint in Ireland’, in *The Age of Migrating Ideas: Early Medieval Art in Northern Britain and Ireland*, ed. Michael R. Spearman, John Higgitt (Edinburgh: National Museums of Scotland, 1993), 188.

even small rectangular buildings.<sup>649</sup> Still, the two primary forms these structures take are either architectural or what can be described as an altar or box.

Material evidence for tomb-shrines is present across Ireland, England, and Scotland, although the artefacts which do survive are often fragmentary, which causes some interpretive challenges.<sup>650</sup> For example, a large eighth- to ninth-century sandstone fragment found at St Vigean, Scotland has been interpreted as a recumbent monument that was possibly shaped like the twelfth-century Clones shrine or, as James Lang suggests, a hogback monument [Figure 120-1].<sup>651</sup> VIG029, as it is catalogued, is a long rectangular slice of a much larger monument; imitation shingles on the top of the fragment suggest that it may have been a gabled or hip-roof monument similar to the Hedda stone of Peterborough, England or the St Leonard's shrine from St Andrews, Scotland [Figure 122-3].<sup>652</sup> However, beyond this identification, as the fragment was cut and reused, it is difficult to know where it was originally positioned, what ornament it depicted, or if it was designed to cover or mark the location of a prominent grave for either an elite figure or a saint.

While the forms of the Hedda Stone and the St Leonard's shrine can be seen today, composite-shrines can be somewhat more difficult, as fragmentation and movement of their separate panels pose additional challenges regarding

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<sup>649</sup> D. M. Waterman, 'An Early Christian Mortuary House at Saul, Co. Down: With Notes on Similar Monuments in Ulster', *Ulster Journal of Archaeology* 23 (1960): 82-88; Michael Herity, 'The Ornamented Tomb of the Saint at Ardoileán, Co. Galway', in *Ireland and Insular Art, A.D. 500-1200*, ed. Michael Ryan (Dublin: Royal Irish Academy, 1987), 141-3; Pádraig Lionard and Françoise Henry, 'Early Irish Grave-Slabs', *Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy* 61 (1960): 95-169.

<sup>650</sup> Waterman, 'Early Christian Mortuary House at Saul, Co. Down', 87.

<sup>651</sup> James T. Lang, 'Hogback Monuments in Scotland', *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland* 105 (1972): 232.

<sup>652</sup> Warwick Rodwell, Jane Hawkes, Emily Howe, and Rosemary Cramp, 'The Lichfield Angel: A Spectacular Anglo-Saxon Painted Sculpture', *The Antiquaries Journal* 88 (2008): 65-6; C. A. Ralegh Radford, 'Two Scottish Shrines: Jedburgh and St. Andrews', *Archaeological Journal* 112, no. 1 (1955): 58-60.

reconstructions. An example of this issue can best be seen with three panel fragments from Jedburgh Abbey, located in the Scottish Borders [Figure 124]. Two of these panels were recorded as discovered in the Priory Church, while the third was found in 1903 in a garden ‘near the Ancrum’.<sup>653</sup> The fragments are all a type of local sandstone, but are ‘creamy white’ in colour as opposed to the ‘duller grey’ sandstone that was used for the Augustinian Priory and the ‘dark, creamy yellow’ stone of the early Christian crosses and sculpture also present at Jedburgh. From this relatively small sample, Radford proposes a reconstruction, albeit one he quickly notes is pure conjecture.<sup>654</sup> He arranges the panels to create a gabled composite tomb-shrine, where panels of stone are fit into grooves that form a box-like structure, on top of which a lid could be placed. This proposed arrangement can still be seen at Jedburgh Abbey, although without Radford’s caveat. This is not to say that there were not composite-shrines that were gabled, as the Anglo-Saxon Lichfield angel panel, while fragmented, does suggest that it once belonged to a composite shrine with a pointed lid or roof, as indicated by the upward sloping top of the panel [Figure 125].<sup>655</sup> However, this is nowhere near as cumbersome as the arrangement Radford suggests.

Moreover, Michael Herity, Penny Dransart, and Peter Moar have found that other early medieval composite-shrines such as those found at Ardoileán, Kinneddar, and Papil were fitted with flat lids, while the larger mortuary houses such as those at Saul, Co. Down, Ireland featured gabled roofs, but not until the ninth century and

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<sup>653</sup> Ernst Kitzinger, ‘Anglo-Saxon Vine-Scroll Ornament’, *The Antiquaries Journal* 10, no. 37 (1936): 64-7.

<sup>654</sup> Radford, ‘Two Scottish Shrines: Jedburgh and St. Andrews’, 45.

<sup>655</sup> Angela Geary and Emily Howe, ‘Three-Dimensional Documentation and Virtual Restoration of the Lichfield Angel’, *Journal of the Institute of Conservation* 32, no. 2 (2009): 166.

onwards [Figures 126-9].<sup>656</sup> Equally so, the A-shaped slab-shrine at Temple Cronan, Burren, Co. Clare is another composite structure [Figure 130] and like the mortuary house at Saul, Co. Down, it allowed access to its contents through an opening in its structure. As first mentioned in chapter three regarding the possible connection between Insular house-shaped shrines and the architecturally shaped-tombs and ossuaries found across the Mediterranean at locations intimately tied to the early church and pilgrimage, there is also a striking similarity between Insular A-shaped tombs and late-antique tent tile tombs, although more research is needed to definitively state whether a ‘genetic’, direct, or indirect link can be found.<sup>657</sup> Still, more locally, the same form used for the Temple Cronan, while also potentially a reference to A-frame houses, was utilised with other Insular shrines.<sup>658</sup>

One surviving example of these triangular containers is the twelfth-century St Manchán shrine, which is associated with the seventh-century St Manchán, founder of a monastic community at Lemanaghan, Co. Offaly [Figures 131.A-D]. The St Manchán shrine is the largest of the surviving medieval Insular reliquaries and was moved to the newly built Boher church in 1860, after being held in a small ruined monastery in Lemanaghan, Co. Offaly. In 1935 the shrine was opened and found to

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<sup>656</sup> Herity, 'Ornamented Tomb of the Saint at Ardoileán, Co. Galway', 141-3; Penny Dransart, 'Two Shrine Fragments from Kinneddar, Moray', in *Pattern and Purpose in Insular Art*, ed. Mark Redknap, et al. (Oxford: Oxbow Books, 1998), 233-40; Peter Moar and John Stewart, 'Newly Discovered Sculptured Stones from Papil, Shetland', *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland* 78 (1944): 91-99; Waterman, 'Early Christian Mortuary House at Saul, Co. Down', 87; Sarah Gormley and Finbar McCormick, *The 'Mortuary House', Saul, Co. Down* (Belfast: Queen's Belfast University, 2014), 19-20.

<sup>657</sup> See Kirsten A. Gay and Thomas Corsten, 'Lycian Tombs in the Kibyratis and the Extent of Lycian Culture', *Anatolian Studies* 56 (2006): 47-60; Comte, *Les Reliquaires du Proche-Orient*; Salim Drici, 'Genèse et permanence des pratiques funéraires de la préhistoire au monde antique en Afrique du Nord', *Insaniyat* 68 (2015): 15-36; Mounir Bouchenaki, *Fouilles de la nécropole occidentale de Tipasa (1968-1972)* (Alger: SNED, 1975).

<sup>658</sup> Aidan O'Sullivan, 'Early Medieval Houses in Ireland: Social Identity and Dwelling Spaces', *Peritia* 20 (2008): 231-4.

contain bits of crumbling bone and part of a femur.<sup>659</sup> The shrine is constructed from copper-alloy panels riveted onto planks of yew wood. The frame of the shrine extends to form four stands which elevate the shrine above the ground. The shrine features cast figurines and large decorative bosses riveted onto the face and back of the shrine.<sup>660</sup> Many of the figures have been lost, as have the finials and crest of the shrine, which may have looked similar to a set of fragmented Insular eighth-century butterfly finials [Figure 132.A-B].<sup>661</sup> In addition, large copper-alloy rings are attached to the legs of the St Manchán shrine, allowing it to be carried on poles; this also may serve as a reference to the Ark of the Covenant and its portability.<sup>662</sup> While now a stationary object, the shrine was thus designed for transportation. Notably, Herity's studies on the layout of early Irish monastic communities argue that the proximity of triangularly shaped tombs to the oratories or churches suggests that the tombs functioned as local sites of pilgrimage, while also echoing practices found across Europe.<sup>663</sup> Indeed, John Hunt, Karen Overbey, and Ragnall Ó Floinn each link the St Manchán shrine to eighth-or ninth-century triangular tombs found in monastic settings like the tomb-shrine of Killabuonia, Co. Kerry [Figure 133].<sup>664</sup>

Moreover, there is evidence for a shrine of this form that was contemporary to Insular house-shaped shrines. The now lost St Winefrid's shrine from Gwytherin,

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<sup>659</sup> Thomas Downing Kendrick and Elizabeth Senior, 'VI.—St. Manchan's Shrine', *Archaeologia (Second Series)* 86 (1937): 108.

<sup>660</sup> Griffin Murray, 'Lost and Found: The Eleventh Figure on St Manchan's Shrine', *The Journal of the Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland* 133 (2003): 177-81.

<sup>661</sup> Graves noted that while shrine lacks an inscription, it could have held one on its lost crest, James Graves, 'The Church and Shrine of St. Manchan', *The Journal of the Royal Historical and Archaeological Association of Ireland* 3 (1874): 149; John Hunt, 'On Two "D"-Shaped Bronze Object in the St. Germain Museum', *Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy* 57 (1955/1956): 153-7.

<sup>662</sup> Ó Carragáin, 'Architectural Setting of the Cult of Relics', 144.

<sup>663</sup> Herity, 'Forms of the Tomb-Shrine', 194.

<sup>664</sup> Hunt, 'Bronze Object in the St. Germain Museum', 153-7; Overbey, *Sacral Geographies*, 48-9; Ó Floinn, *Irish Shrines and Reliquaries*, 114-5.

North Wales was thought to have been destroyed in the mid-nineteenth century, but an illustration by the antiquarian Edward Lluyd [Figure 134] was discovered on a 'loose sheet bound into one of Lluyd's notebooks at the Bodleian', and a wooden gable-end of the shrine, later found to be oak, was discovered in June 1991 by 'Tristan Gray Hulse in the presbytery attached to St Winefride's Catholic Church in Holywell (Flintshire)'.<sup>665</sup> From the illustration and the surviving pieces of the shrine, Nancy Edwards and Gray Hulse state that the shrine would have been approximately 26 cm in height and 20.8 cm in width.<sup>666</sup> Using the proportions recorded by Lluyd or his assistant in the rough sketch of the shrine, the length of the shrine would have been approximately 35 cm.<sup>667</sup> For comparison, the Clonard shrine is the longest Insular house-shaped shrine, measuring 19.2 cm. Thus, the lost St Winefrid's shrine would have appeared more like the later twelfth-century St Manchán's shrine. However, triangular founder tombs are not the same form as Insular house-shaped shrines, and the larger mortuary houses and small church-shaped tomb-shrines provide more fitting *comparanda*.

As such, church architecture again appears as a stronger reference for the form of Insular house-shaped shrines than the later mortuary houses, sarcophagi, or composite or recumbent shrines. This is primarily due to the multivalent nature of these structures, as the relationship between architectural space, churches, tombs, and the Temple of Jerusalem could overlap. This is perhaps best illustrated with the Temple Ciarán at Clonmacnoise, an eighth- ninth-century oratory or tomb-shrine set

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<sup>665</sup> Lawrence Butler and James Graham-Campbell, 'A Lost Reliquary Casket from Gwytherin, North Wales', *The Antiquaries Journal* 70 (1990): 39-43.

<sup>666</sup> Nancy Edwards and Tristan Gray Hulse, 'A Fragment of a Reliquary Casket from Gwytherin, North Wales', *The Antiquaries Journal* 72 (1992): 91-2.

<sup>667</sup> *Ibid.*, 95.



over the grave of St Ciarán [Figure 135].<sup>668</sup> While fragmented, the small building was constructed with four *antae*, potentially in imitation of early wooden churches.<sup>669</sup> Additionally, the structure itself, while functionally overlapping the usages of tomb, shrine, and church, was further related to Christ's tomb and thus the Holy Sepulchre as seen in the Middle Irish life of the saint preserved in the Book of Lismore,

Robui eiseirgi dano don fir-sa iar treidenus ibhus ina imdhai i Cluain do acalluim 7 do chomdhidnad Chaeimgen, amail robhui eiseirghi do Crist iar tredenus asin adhnucul ind Iarusalem do comdhidhnad 7 do nerad a mhathar 7 dheiscipul. Conid arna maithib-sin 7 arna maithibh imdhaib ailib ata a ainim ag muinntir nimhe. Atát a rélce 7 a thaisi ibhus co n-anoir 7 co n-airmheitin, co fertuibh 7 co mírbhuilibh cechlaithidhe.<sup>670</sup>

Here an allusion to Christ's own Resurrection is made and the passage provides a means to align this miracle by St Ciarán intimately with that of Christ's. Through this comparison, the Temple Ciarán, the bed (*imdhai*) of St Ciarán, is directly related to sacred spaces and architecture in Jerusalem.<sup>671</sup> As such, the similarities between Insular house-shaped shrines and the Temple of the Book of Kells were possibly due to not only the previously discussed modes of abstracting architectural spaces and the broad connection between Insular house-shaped shrines and Continental sacral containers discussed in chapter two, but also to local ecclesiastical structures and the

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<sup>668</sup> Rainer Berger, '14C Dating Mortar in Ireland', *Radiocarbon* 34, no. 3 (2016): 886-8.

<sup>669</sup> Radford, 'Irish Church', 3.

<sup>670</sup> 'This man [Ciarán] arose after three days in his bed [*imdhai*] in Cluain to converse with and to comfort Coemgen, as Christ arose after three days from the grave in Jerusalem, to comfort and strengthen His mother and His disciples. So for these good things, and for many others, is his soul among the folk of heaven. His remains and relics are here with honour and renown, with daily wonders and miracles', translation in Robert Macalister and Alexander Stewart, *The Latin & Irish Lives of Ciaran* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1921), 97; *Lives of the Saints from The Book of Lismore*, 134.

<sup>671</sup> Ó Carragáin, 'Architectural Setting of the Cult of Relics', 143-4; Conleth Manning, 'Some Early Masonry Churches and the Round Tower at Clonmacnoise', in *Clonmacnoise Studies: Seminar Papers, 1998*, ed. Heather A. King, vol. 2 (Dublin: Dúchas, 2003), 71; Aidan MacDonald, 'The 'Cathedral', Temple Kelly and Temple Ciaran: Notes from the Annals', in *Clonmacnoise Studies: Seminar Papers, 1998*, ed. Heather A. King, vol. 2 (Dublin: Dúchas, 2003), 131.

varied symbolism intrinsic to the church, both as temporal location and as Heavenly destination.

## **Holy Houses in Sculptured Stone: High Cross Capstones as Miniature Shrines, Churches, and Temples**

Still, the Temptation page is not the only instance of architectural or shrine forms appearing in Insular art. Indeed, church-shaped capstones, either hip- or gable-roofed, appear on a variety of Irish High Crosses. While Harbison has previously linked Insular house-shaped shrines to church- or shrine-shaped capstones, the literature still has not addressed: 1) how might the placement and orientation of iconography and numerological symbolism on the capstones inform our understanding of Insular house-shaped shrines, or 2) how the capstones, if intended to signify Insular house-shaped shrines or shrines analogous to them, inform us of the religious significance of architecturally shaped sacral containers.<sup>672</sup> This section begins to address those *lacunae* in the scholarship.

The capstones of Irish High Crosses fall into three general categories: conical, roof-shaped, and church-shaped. Regarding conical capstones, Hilary Richardson argues that crosses such as the North Cross of Ahenny, Co. Tipperary, may have derived their capstones from depictions of the *Crux gemmata* set underneath canopies or metal caps [Figures 136-8].<sup>673</sup> While it is important to

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<sup>672</sup> Harbison, 'Reliquary-Shrines in Bronze and Stone', 37-50.

<sup>673</sup> Hilary Richardson, 'The Jewelled Cross and its Canopy', in *From the Isles of the North: Early Medieval Art in Ireland and Britain*, ed. Cormac Bourke (Belfast: HMSO, 1995), 177-8, 84; Hamlet Petrosyan, 'Similarities Between the Early Christian Armenian Monuments and Irish High Crosses in Light of New Discoveries', in *Ireland and Armenia: Studies in Language, History and Narrative*, ed. Maxim Fomin, Alvard Jivanyan, and Séamus Mac Mathúna (Washington D. C.: Institute for the Study of Man, 2012), 169-75. Dorothy Kelly further notes that these conical capstones do not appear to be

remember conical capstones may have also been connected to imagined architectural spaces, roof- and church-shaped capstones will serve as the main subjects due to their physical similarity to Insular shrines. Of the two remaining capstone forms, only a few examples survive. With this issue in mind, I have chosen to focus on the best-preserved examples, such as the roof-shaped capstones found on the Killamery High Cross, Co. Kilkenny and the Durrow Cross, Co. Offaly. For church-shaped capstones I have chosen to focus on Muiredach's Cross at Monasterboice, Co. Louth; the Tall or West Cross at Monasterboice, Co. Louth; and the Cross of Scriptures at Clonmacnoise, Co. Offaly.

While the aforementioned crosses were chosen primarily for their surviving capstones, they were additionally selected for their locations. Each cross is at a site of early monastic settlement, typically six- or seventh-century, while the construction of the crosses appears to fall within the ninth to tenth centuries. Briefly touching on each site, a monastery was established at Killamery by St Goban, a disciple of St Fursey, around 632, while the High Cross features an inscription that dates it from approximately 846–62, as it refers to Máel Sechnaill, a high king of Ireland during this period.<sup>674</sup> As for Durrow, the original monastery was possibly founded by St Columba near 553.<sup>675</sup> The illuminated gospel known as the Book of Durrow was at the abbey circa 916, although the cross itself postdates both St Columba and the gospel. Next, Clonmacnoise was founded in 544 by St Ciarán from Rathcroghan, Co.

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later additions to the crosses, Dorothy Kelly, 'The Capstones at Kilkeran, County Kilkenny', *The Journal of the Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland* 115 (1985): 160-2.

<sup>674</sup> Margaret Stokes and T. J. Westropp, 'Notes on the High Crosses of Moone, Drumcliff, Termonfechin, and Killamery', *The Transactions of the Royal Irish Academy* 31 (1896): 567-71; Françoise Henry, *Irish Art in the Early Christian Period, to 800 A.D.* (London: Methuen, 1965), 139-43.

<sup>675</sup> Brian Lacey, 'Columba, Founder of the Monastery of Derry? 'Mihi Manet Incertus'', *The Journal of the Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland* 128 (1998): 42.

Roscommon, and it was allied with the kings of Connacht until the ninth century, after which it was allied with the kings of Meath until the eleventh century.<sup>676</sup> Finally, Monasterboice was founded in the late fifth century by St Buithe and remained an important ecclesiastical site well into the twelfth century.<sup>677</sup> I have therefore chosen to focus on sites that are both locations of early monasteries and places of elite patronage, so as to highlight the dual functions of these monuments and the depiction of analogous shrine forms on sculpture with the potential for both clerical and lay audiences. Due to their ninth-century or later dates, these capstones would not have been prototypes for house-shaped shrines or analogous containers; rather, they represent a response to pre-existing objects, traditions, and motifs—much in the same way the Temptation page was discussed above—thereby making them well-suited to an examination on how the form of Insular house-shaped shrines may have been perceived by various audiences.

While the focus of this examination will be on the ornament, iconography, and form of the capstones, it is also important to consider first how these capstones may have visually interacted with their bases. The South Cross at Clonmacnoise is still paired with its base, allowing one to see how the base and capstone might work in tandem [Figure 139].<sup>678</sup> When viewed from a distance, the roof-shaped capstone does not appear separate from the overall monument; the cross appears to rise from the base, thus turning the roof-shaped capstone into a type of lid skeuomorph. Indeed, crosses served as *foci* for liturgical celebrations, and some may have been

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<sup>676</sup> Thomas Bodkin, 'Clonmacnoise', *The Furrow* 2, no. 10 (1951): 587-8.

<sup>677</sup> James Garry, 'The Monasterboice Inscriptions', *Seanchas Ardmhacha: Journal of the Armagh Diocesan Historical Society* 14, no. 1 (1990): 102.

<sup>678</sup> Ian Fisher, 'Christ's Cross Down into the Earth: Some Cross-Bases and their Problems', in *Able Minds and Practised Hands*, ed. Sally Foster and Morag Cross (Leeds: The Society for Medieval Archaeology, 2005), 85-94.

carved with special cavities to hold relics, as possibly seen with a cross-shaft fragment from Aberlady, East Lothian, Scotland [Figure 140].<sup>679</sup> As discussed in the previous chapter, Insular house-shaped shrines such as those from Bologna and Monymusk also feature cross-patterns on their faces, while the small ‘shrines’ that appear on the ridgepoles of Insular house-shaped shrines represent other instances of shrine forms placed on the tops of Insular art. When the cross patterns on shrines such as Bologna and Monymusk are compared with the High Crosses, interesting parallels emerge. Namely, the cross itself is visually framed by its large base and small capstone, in some cases making the cross appear to be symbolically contained within a shrine. Additionally, the cross patterns ornamenting the outside faces of Insular house-shaped shrines are visually broken when their lids are opened; however, the internal locking mechanisms used on all complete Insular house-shaped shrines help achieve a visually clean composition on the shrines’ faces, which allows the placement of the escutcheons to appear more seamless. The top portions of these ‘cross’ forms are created by the small shrine forms that ornament some shrines such as Bologna and Monymusk.<sup>680</sup> Indeed, when accounting for the evidence provided by the slightly less eroded capstone of the Killamery High Cross, Co. Kilkenny [Figure 141], it is important to note that some capstones would have been carved with variations of ridgepoles and finials, further linking them to Insular house-shaped shrines and architectural motifs. While these capstones are described as roof-shaped due to their triangular form, their forms can also be read as related to A-frame houses, tombs, and even portable shrines, such as the previously mentioned St

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<sup>679</sup> Blackwell, 'Individuals', 66.

<sup>680</sup> Stevenson, 'Further Notes', 473-4.

Winefride's shrine and St Manchán's shrine.<sup>681</sup> In this sense, roof-shaped capstones may have both alluded to triangular tombs and shrines, while also blending with the cross head to form church-shaped structures.

Because of low survival rates, this blending is best seen with the previously mentioned Durrow capstone, Co. Offaly [Figure 142.A-D], which can serve as a visual bridge between the roof-shaped and church-shaped capstones. The capstone is a form similar to the previously mentioned capstone of the South Cross at Clonmacnoise. However, on the cross from Durrow, the portion of the cross above the transom visually blends with its capstone, unlike the capstone on the South Cross at Clonmacnoise which is separated by a thick band which outlines the cross below it.

Due to this blending seen on the cross from Durrow between its capstone and cross, the section of the cross above the transom appears to be a shrine form; in this case, the cross and its capstone are united by its ornamentation, providing possible insights into the significance of this shrine form above the cross and the scenes which decorate its sides. On the south side of the capstone [Figure 142.B], a horseman faces left, while the north [Figure 142.D] depicts a squatting figure with hands outstretched.<sup>682</sup> Unfortunately, the south-facing capstone gable is too fragmented to determine the carvings; however, the north-facing gable depicts a single boss from which three snakes emerge, possibly a reference to the Trinity. The

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<sup>681</sup> O'Sullivan, 'Early Medieval Houses in Ireland', 231-4.

<sup>682</sup> The horseman could be depicting Christ or a more contemporary elite figure, while the north figure finds parallels with both *orans* figures and the devil found on the Drosten Stone at St Vigean, Scotland. Ann Carrington, 'The Horseman and the Falcon: Mounted Falconers in Pictish Sculpture', *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland* 126 (1996): 459-68; Helen M. Roe, 'The Orans in Irish Christian Art', *The Journal of the Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland* 100, no. 2 (1970): 212-21; Henderson, *Pictish Monsters*, 51.

west side of the cross head depicts the Crucifixion [Figure 142.C], while a bird or the Holy Spirit perches over Christ's head. In the topmost cross panel, three figures are depicted: the central figure, Christ, is shown handing the flanking figures, SS Peter and Paul, a key and book, making this a likely depiction of the *Traditio clavium*.<sup>683</sup> On the east face of the cross [Figure 142.A], Christ is depicted in the Last Judgement, surrounded by images of David playing his harp and slaying a lion.<sup>684</sup> Above Christ's head is a small circle, inside of which is a lamb. This circle helps to visually transition the viewer's gaze to the top of the cross, which is decorated with four bosses that are in turn surrounded by snake-like beasts.

Regarding the ornament of the cross, while animal ornament is not a fixed category, the use of snakes is not an uncommon motif in Insular art, and their appearance on this cross could relate to themes of resurrection and wisdom, in which the beast connected to the biblical fall from grace is then employed to visually herald the coming of Christ.<sup>685</sup> Moreover, the appearance of four bosses and an *Agnus Dei* above the Judgement scene on the western face of the cross can further be linked to themes specific to the Temple and the Heavenly Jerusalem. First, the arrangement of the snakes and bosses forms a *chi* shape, itself a symbol of Christ, while the use of four bosses may recall the four Gospels.<sup>686</sup> As the space between the *Agnus Dei* and the four bosses is not separated into panels, I suggest that the *Agnus Dei* should be read as part of the composition of the four bosses. Second, the use of architectural motifs to crown the cross connects it visually to both local and imagined architecture;

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<sup>683</sup> Peter Harbison, *The High Crosses of Ireland*, vol. 1 (Bonn: Habelt, 1992), 81.

<sup>684</sup> *Ibid.*, 79-80.

<sup>685</sup> Mac Lean, 'Snake-Bosses and Redemption', 245-53.

<sup>686</sup> Suzanne Lewis, 'Sacred Calligraphy: The Chi Rho Page in the Book of Kells', *Traditio* 36 (1980): 151.

indeed, the blending of the cross and its capstone may be signalling the importance of the Resurrection as a central mystery within the church, both as a physical structure and a transhistorical and heavenly symbol. Reading the western side of the capstone and cross head as making a church-shaped shrine, the symbolism of four bosses and one circle associates the cross with exegesis on the number five, which specifically appears within the various measurements, objects, and ornaments of the Temple and is also related to the first five books of the Old Testament, as noted in Jerome's *Commentarii in evangelium Matthaei*, 'est hic quidam puer qui habet quinque panes, quem mihi videtur significare moysen, duos autem pisces vel utrumque intellegimus testamentum vel quia par numerus refertur ad legem'.<sup>687</sup> Still, the five senses offer a more likely allusion.<sup>688</sup>

As seen within Bede's *De templo*, the number five is deeply associated with the measurements for the Temple and the senses,

Bene autem hoc tabulatum in tecta domus Domini quinque cubitos altum esse memoratur, quia nimirum ita nos in illa patria divinae praesentia claritatis adimplet, ut nihil aliud visus noster, nihil auditus, nihil olfactus, nihil gustus, nihil tactus, dulce habeat, nisi diligere Dominum Deum nostrum ex toto corde, tota anima, tota virtute; diligere et proximum tanquam nos ipsos.<sup>689</sup>

In addition, the altar within the Tabernacle, a prefiguring of the Temple and Christ's sacrifice on the cross, is also constructed in multiples of five, as seen in Exodus

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<sup>687</sup> 'This is a certain boy who has five loaves of bread, which seems to me to signify Moses, or moreover, two fish which we understand [to signify] the Testament or because it is related to the number [two], the Law', Hieronymus, *Commentarii in evangelium Matthaei*, ed. D. Hurst, vol. 77, Corpus Christianorum Series Latina (Turnhout: Brepols Publishers, 1969), Book: 2, Line: 1240.

<sup>688</sup> Rosa Maria Fera, 'Metaphors for the Five Senses in Old English Prose', *The Review of English Studies* 63 (2012): 709-17; Eric Palazzo, 'Art, Liturgy, and the Five Senses in the Early Middle Ages', *Viator* 41, no. 1 (2010): 29-34.

<sup>689</sup> 'This structure on the roof of the house of the Lord is rightly said to be five cubits high because, of course, the presence of God's glory in it that homeland (of ours) fills us in such a way that nothing else is sweet to our sight, our hearing, our sense of smell or taste or touch except to love the Lord our God with our whole heart, our whole soul, our whole mind, and also to love our neighbour as ourselves', translation in *Bede: On the Temple*, 33; Bede Venerabilis, *De templo libri ii*, 119A, Book: 1, Line: 877.



26:1.<sup>690</sup> While numerological symbolism, if present, was likely read in its most multivalent sense, Bede's discussion of the roof of the Temple, its relation to the five senses, and the appearance of the glory of God all relate strongly to the presence of five circles on the upper portion of a High Cross and indeed similar placements of bosses or glass on Insular house-shaped shrines, as seen with the Clonmore shrine [Figure 10.A]. Indeed, the Clonmore shrine is not the only Insular house-shaped shrine with five settings on its face; the Amiata shrine also has five gem or glass settings [Figure 20.A], while, when accounting for lost escutcheons, the same pattern is found on the Lough Erne (A) shrine [Figure 5.A]. Notably, the western side of the Durrow capstone depicts three figures, which are then paired with the four bosses and *Agnus Dei* of the eastern face of the capstone; the Clonmore shrine also features a similar composition, perhaps numerologically motivated, with five glass settings on its face and three incised circles on the back of the shrine. By viewing these architectural features and possibly numerologically inspired compositions as allusions to both Church and Temple, the symbolism imbedded in the cross and the relationship between the church-shaped capstones and Insular house-shaped shrines becomes more fully understood.

While church-shaped capstones are present on other Irish High Crosses, the capstones of the Termonfeckin High Cross, Co. Louth [Figure 143] and the Ardboe High Cross, Co. Tyrone [Figures 144.A-B] are too fragmented to decipher.<sup>691</sup> Indeed, only the north- and south-facing sides of the Ardboe High Cross capstone feature any surviving ornamentation; all that can be discerned is that the sides of the capstone

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<sup>690</sup> Augustinus Hipponensis, *Enarrationes in psalmos*, ed. E. Dekkers and J. Fraipont, vol. 38-40, Corpus Christianorum Series Latina (Turnhout: Brepols Publishers, 1956), Psalm: 26, Exposition: 2, Part: 10-1, Line: 35-15.

<sup>691</sup> Harbison, *High Crosses of Ireland*, vol. 1, Cat. 209 p. 170-1, Cat. 8 p. 15-8.

were decorated with interlace. Fortunately, three detailed church-shaped capstones do survive.

The High Cross known as Muiredach's Cross [Figures 145.A-D] is from the ninth or tenth century, carved from sandstone, and bears an inscription mentioning the name Muiredach as the patron. Abbot Muiredach mac Domhnaill (d. 923) and king Muiredach mac Cathnail (d. 867) have both been proposed as possible patrons.<sup>692</sup> Regarding its ornament, the panels of the cross depict scenes from across the Old and New Testaments.<sup>693</sup> The eastern face of the capstone depicts two figures with spears attacking a winged figure—possibly SS Paul of Thebes and Anthony of Egypt fighting a winged beast or demon [Figure 145.A].<sup>694</sup> The top of the capstone is carved to look like a roof with shingles, and the articulation of the ridgepole is well preserved; these 'shingles' are also seen on the eastern side of the capstone. The south side of the capstone features a mounted rider holding a book aloft [Figure 145.B]; two angels are positioned behind the rider, one of which may hold a censer. The carving's similarity to 'folios 19v and 24r of the Trier Apocalypse, a west Frankish manuscript of c. 800' suggests that the scene may be apocalyptic [Figures 146.A-B].<sup>695</sup> The southern side of the capstone features six bosses arranged from large to small in interlocking triangles from which animals emerge [Figure 145.D]. The western face of the capstone has been described as depicting the Transfiguration, Christ's Mission to the Apostles, or the *Traditio clavium* as a few examples [Figure

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<sup>692</sup> John Hunt, 'The Cross of Muiredach, Monasterboice', *The Journal of the Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland* 81, no. 1 (1951): 44-7.

<sup>693</sup> Catherine E. Karkov, 'Adam and Eve on Muiredach's Cross: Presence, Absence and Audience', in *From the Isles of the North: Early Medieval Art in Ireland and Britain*, ed. Bourke Cormac (Belfast: HMSO, 1995), 210.

<sup>694</sup> Harbison, *High Crosses of Ireland*, vol. 1, 142.

<sup>695</sup> Trier Domschatz, MS 61. *Ibid.*, 143.

145.C].<sup>696</sup> Éamonn Ó Carragáin further notes the similarity of the scene to how Christ is described in the Canticle of Habakkuk.<sup>697</sup> Finally, the north side of the capstone depicts SS Paul of Thebes and Anthony of Egypt crossing staves and holding a piece of bread, while the gable is decorated with a central boss from which three snake heads emerge.

In another detail of the capstone's north-side panel, a raven descends with a loaf of bread in its beak—according to Jerome's *Vita sancti Pauli eremitae*—a symbol of God's grace,

Inter has sermocinationes suspiciunt alitem corvum in ramo arboris consedissee, qui inde leniter subvolabat, et integrum panem ante ora mirantium deposuit; post cuius abscessum: Eia, inquit Paulus, Dominus nobis prandium misit, vere pius, vere misericors. Sexaginta jam anni sunt quod dimidii semper panis fragmentum accipio: verum ad adventum tuum, militibus suis Christus duplicavit annonam.<sup>698</sup>

SS Anthony of Egypt and Paul of Thebes were intimately tied to the Insular monastic communities' conceptualisation of the local landscape and their desire to live as much like the desert fathers as possible, which can explain the place of import they are afforded on the cross.<sup>699</sup> Regarding the three snake heads which emerge from the boss above the saints, the number three is often described as representing the Trinity, as can be seen in Gregory the Great's *Homiliae in Hiezechihelam prophetam*, in which the number thirteen is divided into ten and three to denote the Ten

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<sup>696</sup> Roger Stalley, 'European Art and the Irish High Crosses', *Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy* 90 (1990): 138.

<sup>697</sup> Éamonn Ó Carragáin, 'The Meeting of St Paul and St Anthony: Visual and Literary Uses of a Eucharistic Motif', in *Keimelia: Studies in Medieval Archaeology and History in Memory of Tom Delaney*, ed. Tom Delaney, Gearóid Mac Niocaill, and Patrick F. Wallace (Galway: Galway University Press, 1988), 38-44.

<sup>698</sup> 'Thus conversing, they noticed a sign, a raven seated on the branch of a tree, and then flying gently down it deposited a whole loaf of bread from its mouth before them. They were amazed. After which it departed. 'See', said Paul, 'the Lord, truly loving, sent us a meal. I have always received half a fragment of bread for sixty years since; true in respect to your coming, Christ has doubled the provision of his soldiers', Hieronymus, *Vita sancti Pauli eremitae*, ed. J.P. Migne, vol. 23, *Patrologia Latina* (Paris: Garnier et Migne, 1883), Col.0025C.

<sup>699</sup> Bernard McGinn, 'Ocean and Desert as Symbols of Mystical Absorption in the Christian Tradition', *The Journal of Religion* 74, no. 2 (1994): 155-72.

Commandments of the Old Testament and the centrality of the Trinity in the New Testament as expressed by the measurements of the Temple, ‘Mensuretur vero longitudo portae tredecim cubitis, quia per testamentum novum in corde fidelis populi super mandata decalogi, quae verius custodit, cognitio trinitatis crevit’.<sup>700</sup> As St Paul of Thebes comments on the doubling of his divine meal to accommodate St Anthony of Egypt, along with his specific mention of the number sixty, it is perhaps telling that the southern side of the capstone features six bosses, a doubling of the three found on the north end. Furthermore, the Eucharistic messages imbedded in the symbol of the raven feeding the saints divinely sent bread can also be found in Bede’s description of how the number six relates to the passion and resurrection of Christ in *De tabernaculo*,

Unde recte praecipitur sextum sagum in fronte tecti duplicari, propter confessionem videlicet et imitationem eiusdem dominicae passionis. Neque enim sufficit, credentes solum in confessione mortis Domini ac resurrectionis baptizari et consecrari, si non etiam baptizatus quisque studuerit, in quantum valet, similitudini mortis Domini continenter vivendo, ac patiundo pro illo assimilari, ut et resurrectionis eius particeps existere mereatur.<sup>701</sup>

While the capstone features a scene that likely alludes to the Eucharist in the divinely sent raven, when viewed in the context of the other panels, wider themes of protection, resurrection, and the glorification of God can be seen in this church- or shrine-shaped capstone, which follows the multifunctional nature of both church and

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<sup>700</sup> ‘The length of the gate measures thirteen cubits because the commandments of the Decalogue, truly kept in the hearts of the faithful, through the New Testament grows in knowledge of the Trinity’, Gregorius Magnus, *Homiliae in Hiezechielem prophetam*, ed. M. Adriaen, vol. 142, Corpus Christianorum Series Latina (Turnhout: Brepols Publishers, 1971), Book: 2, Homily: 4, Line 302.

<sup>701</sup> ‘For this reason the sixth covering is rightly commanded to be doubled at the front of the roof, evidently on account of the confession and the imitation of the same passion of the Lord. For it is not enough for believers if they are only baptized and consecrated in the confession of the Lord’s death and resurrection, if once baptized they are not also eager to be conformed to the likeness of the Lord’s death as far as they are able, by living continently and by suffering for his sake, so that they may also merit to become partakers in his resurrection’, translation in *Bede: On the Tabernacle*, trans. Arthur G. Holder (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1994), 58; Bede Venerabilis, *De tabernaculo et vasis eius ac vestibus sacerdotum*, ed. J. P. Migne, vol. 91, Patrologia Latina (Paris: Garnier et Migne, 1862), Col.0431D.

portable shrine. The shingle-like pattern, butterfly terminals, and verticality of these types of capstones have led scholars such as Tomás Ó Carragáin to describe the capstones as representative of churches, while Harbison sees a more fluid relationship between the capstones, churches, and shrines.<sup>702</sup> In comparison, explicit scenes pertaining to the Eucharist do not commonly appear on Insular house-shaped shrines. Indeed, as chapter four discussed, SS Michael and Gabriel on the Mortain shrine may be holding wreaths rather than the Eucharist, and the vine-filled chalices of the Moissac shrine, while a more Eucharistic motif, do not appear solely or even primarily on objects used for the Eucharist. While figurative, the iconography of the eastern and western sides of the capstone are composed around three figures, which could be linked to the repetition of three on the faces and backs of Insular house-shaped shrines.

The numbers three and six, discussed in the above paragraphs on numerology and the Muiredach's Cross capstone, are also incorporated into the ornamentation of Insular house-shaped shrines. The Amiata, Bologna, Clonmore, Emly, London, Lough Erne (A), Melhus, Mortain, Ranvaik, Setnes, and Shannon shrines all feature either the use of three escutcheons or triangularly composed designs incised on their faces or backs, while the Monymusk and Bologna shrine feature six prominently placed escutcheons in alternating circles and rectangles on their faces. However, in contrast to the above capstones, these prominently placed ornaments are not relegated to the sides of the shrines; rather, they embellish the surfaces of the shrines that would have been the most visible if the shrines were suspended and then venerated or worn on the body.

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<sup>702</sup> Ó Carragáin, *Churches in Early Medieval Ireland*, 22; Harbison, 'Reliquary-Shrines in Bronze and Stone', 37-45.

In contrast to the salvific themes present on Muiredach's cross, the Tall or West Cross at Monasterboice, Co. Louth features more militaristic and sacrificial themes [Figure 147.A-D]. The east-facing side of the cross head depicts David surrounded by the soldiers of Israel, while the capstone's panel above may depict the repentance of Manasseh [Figure 147.A].<sup>703</sup> The carving of shingles, which appear on each side of the capstone's 'roof', including the gables, again links the capstones to architectural space. The south-facing side of the capstone depicts five bosses surrounded by snake-like beasts [Figure 147.B], while the north-facing side features eight bosses [Figure 147.D]. Unfortunately, the east- and west-facing sides of the capstone are heavily eroded. Harbinson suggests that the west-facing side of the cross head depicts the Crucifixion and the capstone depicts Pilate washing his hands; Helen Roe suggests the capstone could be depicting St Mark.<sup>704</sup> Arthur Porter argues that the western side of the capstone depicts Moses during the battle against Amalek as described in Exodus 17:10–12.<sup>705</sup> While the symbolism of five has already been noted, I suggest that the eight bosses could represent the Resurrection or perhaps even the completion of the Temple and the Day of Judgement,

Quod autem in septimo anno, et in octavo eius mense perfecta est domus Domini in omni opere suo, et in universis utensilibus, ad futurum saeculum diemque iudicii pertinet, quando ad tantam iam perfectionem sancta Ecclesia perveniet, ut quid ei amplius addi possit inveniri non possit. Habebit enim tunc, quod pius ille desiderator supplex a Domino quaerebat, dicens: Domine, ostende nobis Patrem, et sufficit nobis. Constat enim quia dies iudicii saepe in Scripturis octonario numero typice exprimitur, eo quod hoc saeculum, quod septem diebus currit, sequatur.<sup>706</sup>

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<sup>703</sup> *High Crosses of Ireland*, vol. 1, 148.

<sup>704</sup> *Ibid.*, 151.

<sup>705</sup> Arthur Porter, *The Crosses and Culture of Ireland* (New York: Benjamin Blom, 1971), 51-3.

<sup>706</sup> 'On the other hand, the fact that it was in the eighth year and in the eighth month of that year that the house was completed in all its parts and all its specifications, has to do with the world to come and the day of judgement when the holy Church will already have reached such a degree of perfection that it will not be possible to find anything to add to it. For it will then have what that dutiful devotee suppliantly asked of the Lord saying, Lord, show us the Father; and it is enough for us. For it is well known that the day of judgement is often represented typologically in the scriptures by the number

Thus, the bosses found on these church-shaped capstones, while serving as ornamentation, may have also carried deeper symbolism directly relating the capstones to the Church and Temple. The Temple was simultaneously localized in the present church, historical in a Biblical sense, and connected to the apostolic mission or, as Augustine of Hippo demonstrates in his *Enarrationes in psalmos*, eschatologically related to the image of the New Jerusalem,

ipse habitat in Sion, quod interpretatur speculatio, et gestat imaginem ecclesiae quae nunc est; sicut Ierusalem gestat imaginem ecclesiae quae futura est, id est civitatis sanctorum iam angelica vita fruientium, quia Ierusalem interpretatur visio pacis. praecedit autem speculatio visionem, sicut ista ecclesia praecedit eam quae promittitur, civitatem immortalem et aeternam.<sup>707</sup>

Given that these capstones seem to be based in part on Insular house-shaped shrines and analogous shrine forms, the original shrines, which served as inspiration for these capstones, were likely understood to be similarly connected to the Temple. The Temple, Tabernacle, Heavenly Jerusalem, Christ, and the Church, both as a structure and as a community, were deeply interrelated and cannot be separated as isolated entities. Thus, all churches were implicitly images of the New Jerusalem, the Temple, the Tabernacle, and Christ.

The final complete church-shaped capstone to be discussed is found on the Cross of the Scriptures at Clonmacnoise [Figure 148.A-D]. The four-meter tenth-century cross, carved from sandstone, bears an inscription mentioning both king Flann-Sianna and the abbot Colmán.<sup>708</sup> The *Annals of the Four Masters* mention the

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eight from the fact that it follows this world which lasts for seven days', translation in *Bede: On the Temple*, 72; Bede Venerabilis, *De templo libri ii*, 119A, Book: 2, Line: 201.

<sup>707</sup> The Lord dwells in Sion, which is interpreted observing, and which bears the image of the church that is present, as Jerusalem bears the image of the Church which is the future, that is the city of saints enjoying the angelic life, for Jerusalem is interpreted as the Vision of Peace. Preceded by this vision, as the church preceded promised, it is an immortal and eternal city', Augustinus Hipponensis, *Enarrationes in psalmos*, 38-40, Psalm: 9, Part: 12, Line 2-3.

<sup>708</sup> Françoise Henry, 'Around an Inscription: The Cross of the Scriptures at Clonmacnoise', *The Journal of the Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland* 110 (1980): 36-40.

presence of the cross in 1060, allowing for an additional means of dating.<sup>709</sup> Similar to the aforementioned monuments, the Cross of the Scriptures is situated on a monastic site and features extensive Biblical scenes carved throughout.<sup>710</sup> Westropp suggests that the east-facing side of the capstone depicts the Trinity, while Harbison describes the scene as Christ in Majesty [Figure 148.A].<sup>711</sup> Unlike Muiredach's Cross, the capstone of the Cross of the Scriptures features three panels of abstracted ornament and large rounded bosses. While the capstone of Muiredach's Cross is gable-roofed, the capstone roof of the Cross of the Scriptures appears to angle slightly inward, giving the appearance of a hip-shaped roof. The western face of the capstone depicts five bosses [Figure 148.C], the northern side seven [Figure 148.D], and the south side six [Figure 148.B]. The significance of five and six have already been discussed, and the appearance of five bosses above the cross head and directly above the Crucifixion, similar to the Durrow Cross, likely pertains to the engagement of the five senses in this contemplative and visual display of Christ's sacrifice on the cross. The seven bosses on the northern side of the capstone could signify the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit or the seven means of receiving divine forgiveness outlined by Cassiodorus in *Expositio psalmorum*,

In sexto quippe psalmo auctoritatem secuti maiorum, diximus septem modis remissionem nobis dominum concedere peccatorum. Primo per baptismum, secundo per martyrium, tertio per eleemosynas, quarto cum debitoribus nostris debita

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<sup>709</sup> Peter Harbison, 'The Inscriptions on the Cross of the Scriptures at Clonmacnoise, County Offaly', *Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy* 79 (1979): 177-88.

<sup>710</sup> Ragnall Ó Floinn, 'Clonmacnoise: Art and Patronage in the Early Medieval Period', in *From the Isles of the North: Early Medieval Art in Ireland and Britain*, ed. Cormac Bourke (Belfast: HMSO, 1994), 251-60.

<sup>711</sup> Thomas Johnson Westropp, 'A Description of the Ancient Buildings and Crosses at Clonmacnois, King's County', *The Journal of the Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland* Fifth Series, 37, no. 3 (1907): 277-8; Harbison, *High Crosses of Ireland*, vol. 1, 49.



relaxamus, quinto per conversionem fratrum, sexto per abundantiam caritatis, septimo per paenitentiam.<sup>712</sup>

Furthermore, as observed by Bede, the Temple also featured measurements that grouped the numbers seven, six, and five, which could provide one possible interpretation of the whole program of bossed panels of the capstone.<sup>713</sup> Indeed, while some Insular house-shaped shrines, such as the Lough Erne (A), Ranvaik, and Setnes, feature three escutcheons on their faces and backs, totalling six, they appear to be employed more as repetitions of the number three, given their triangular arrangement. However, the Clonmore shrine may be the shrine most similar to capstones such as the Cross of Scriptures, as five pieces of blue glass adorn the shrine, similar to the five bosses on the western face of the capstone, while three circles are incised into the back panels of the Clonmore shrine, which may find parallels to the three figures, possibly the Trinity, on the eastern face of the capstone on the Cross of Scriptures.

The Temple, Tabernacle, Heavenly Jerusalem, Christ, and Church, both as a structure and as a community, were all deeply interrelated, and as I suggest, the inclusion of church-, shrine-, or temple-shaped capstones on Irish High Crosses further highlights the importance of this concept within Insular art. If architecturally shaped shrines could evoke the image of the church, as seen with Insular house-shaped shrines, they could then incorporate these broad religious images such as the Temple and the Heavenly Jerusalem. In comparison to High Cross capstones, Insular

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<sup>712</sup> ‘On Psalm 6 we followed the authority of the Father in saying that the Lord grants us remission of sins in seven ways: by baptism, martyrdom, almsgiving, releasing our debtors from debts, conversion of our brothers, abundance of charity, and repentance’, translation in *Cassiodorus: Explanation of the Psalms*, ed. Walter J. Burghardt and Thomas Comerford Lawler, trans. Patrick Gerard Walsh, vol. 2 (New York: Newman Press, 1990), 177; Cassiodorus, *Expositio psalmorum*, ed. M. Adriaen, vol. 97-8, Corpus Christianorum Series Latina (Turnhout: Brepols Publishers, 1958), Psalm: 70, Line: 420-1.

<sup>713</sup> Beda Venerabilis, *De templo libri ii*, 119A, Book 1, Chapter: 7.

house-shaped shrines do not show the exact same ornamentation, with their sides lacking the extensive decoration usually found on capstones. Still, the western and eastern faces of the capstones discussed above show some similarities with Insular house-shaped shrines in their repetition of threes and fives, either in their placement of figures or their arrangement of decorative bosses. As capstones are later than the earliest phase of Insular house-shaped shrines, they are not an influence on the shrines but likely represent a later engagement with the shrine form that shifts to a more figural ornamentation, while still incorporating architectural motifs imbedded into Insular house-shaped shrines, such as ridgepoles and lids with shingles.

Regarding the figural ornamentation of the capstones, no single iconography appears as the only appropriate scene: the eastern and western sides of Muiredach's Cross capstone depict scenes of protection and the glorification of the body of Christ, the eastern side of the Tall or West Cross at Monasterboice capstone may depict the repentance of Manasseh, and the eastern side of the Cross of the Scriptures at Clonmacnoise capstone may depict the Trinity or Christ in Majesty; similarly, the Durrow Cross capstone, when read as a shrine form by incorporating the portion of the cross above the transom, depicts a horseman, a squatting figure, ornamental bosses, and possibly the *Traditio clavium*. While one might expect more Eucharistic scenes close to the centre of these monumental crosses, the only implicit Eucharistic scene on a capstone is found on the north-side panel of the Muiredach's Cross capstone, which depicts a raven descending with a loaf of bread in its beak. Much like the multivalent church, both temporal and heavenly, these capstones display wide reaching themes, indicating that if indeed these capstones are to be read as shrine- or church-forms, they too do not serve simply one function. Much like the

Temptation page of the Book of Kells, Insular house-shaped shrines and capstones are separate yet interconnected reactions to the pervasive and religiously significant symbol of the Temple.

## **Carried, Worn, or Hung? Representations of House-Shaped Shrines**

As discussed in the previous chapters, the portability of Insular house-shaped shrines was a key concern of their construction. Having discussed the relationship between Insular house-shaped shrines, contemporary church architecture, and capstones, I will now examine potential depictions of Insular house-shaped shrines as portable objects and how they relate to latent forms of spiritual symbolism, possibly imbedded in the physicality of the shrines. Namely, this section questions how representations of Insular house-shaped shrines might be identified and what these depictions reveal about the significance of carrying or wearing church-shaped containers.

Due to their architectural nature and Insular stylisation, Insular house-shaped shrines are sometimes difficult to identify in stonework. On the Hoddum cross shaft No. 22 [Figures 149.A-B], an analogous form to both church-shaped capstones and Insular house-shaped shrines can be found. Hoddum is a small civil parish in Dumfries and Galloway, Scotland, whose earliest reference can be traced to a letter from Alcuin of York to Wulfhard in the eighth century; the local church boasts a collection of stonework from the same period and beyond.<sup>714</sup> The monument referred

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<sup>714</sup> Michael Parker, 'An Eighth-Century Reference to the Monastery at Hoddum', *The Journal of Scottish Name Studies* 6 (2012): 61-6; C. A. Ralegh Radford, 'Hoddum', *Antiquity* 27, no. 107 (1953): 153-60.

to as Hoddom No. 22 is a portion of a cross shaft; unfortunately, the scene in question is fragmented. Despite its fragmentation, on a lower section of the cross shaft, a trapezoidal structure decorated with zoomorphic terminals can be seen. Regrettably, the damage to this section of the cross renders it difficult to ascertain what exactly the Hoddom fragment depicts. Still, the iconography of the surviving panels consists of figures holding books, each set within architectural frames.<sup>715</sup> By including zoomorphic terminals on a trapezoidal structure, whether it is a niche, an abstraction of a larger architectural space, or even an Insular house-shaped shrine, this depiction aligns the motif of zoomorphic terminals and trapezoidal roofs with the wider example of Christian architectural symbolism. Whatever the case, the Church's metaphorical connection to both the earthly and the Heavenly Jerusalem was an important aspect of Christian theology and liturgy.<sup>716</sup>

The next artefact, while having been identified as possibly depicting an Insular house-shaped shrine, also possesses its own interpretive issues. Found during the excavation of the medieval site of St Marnock church at Inchmarnock, an island on the west coast of Scotland, the Hostage Stone [Figure 150] recently served as inspiration for a short film during the National Museum of Scotland's exhibition in 2014, *Creative Spirit*, on how the Monymusk shrine may have been carried [Figure 151.].<sup>717</sup> The artefact is an incised piece of slate depicting four figures and a boat; three of the figures wear armour, while the leftmost figure is depicted with arms

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<sup>715</sup> Derek Johnston Craig, 'The Distribution of Pre-Norman Sculpture in South-West Scotland: Provenance, Ornament and Regional Groups' (Phd diss., University of Durham, 1992), 123.

<sup>716</sup> Ann Raftery Meyer, *Medieval Allegory and the Building of the New Jerusalem* (Woodbridge: D. S. Brewer, 2003), 27-67; Tessa Morrison, 'The Art of Early Medieval Number Symbolism', *Journal of the Australian Early Medieval Association* 2 (2006): 169-81; Robert Deshman, 'The Galba Psalter: Pictures, Texts and Context in an Early Medieval Prayerbook', *Anglo-Saxon England* 26 (1997): 117-8.

<sup>717</sup> 'Hostage Stone', <http://www.nms.ac.uk/explore/collections-stories/scottish-history-and-archaeology/early-medieval-scotland/bringing-the-past-to-life/hostage-stone/>, accessed March 5 2015.

outstretched with what Christopher Lowe describes as shackles or a lock. Lowe interprets the scene as a hostage or slave exchange, but he also suggests that the depiction could be a monk holding a bell, a bell shrine, or a book satchel.<sup>718</sup> Lowe's analysis is the most extensive to date, and indeed Angus Somerville's and Julia Smith's discussions of the slate primarily refer to Lowe's study.<sup>719</sup> However, the diminutive object held by the figure is rectangular and horizontally orientated, while bells or bell-shrines are more vertically aligned than what the stone depicts.<sup>720</sup> Similarly, book satchels or shrines, as depicted on Pictish cross slabs such as the Papil stone [Figure 152] from Shetland, further display a stouter form than is depicted on the Hostage Stone.<sup>721</sup> A belt or chain appears to link the shrine to the monk's waist; this would cause the waist-chain to be pulled away from the figure, much in the manner depicted on the Hostage Stone. However, this appears at odds with what the literature suggests, i.e., *chrismals* and *capsellae* were typically described as being worn around the neck.<sup>722</sup> Still, as Lowe suggests, the figure may be simply chained and depicted with a lock.

For comparison, clearly depicted portable shrines can also be found in Continental material. While executed in ivory on the Continent, the ninth-century St Gall diptych, attributed to Tuotilo [Figure 153], depicts a scene from an Insular *vita* in which the Irish St Gall calms a bear through the relics in his *capsellam*.<sup>723</sup>

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<sup>718</sup> Christopher Lowe, 'Image and Imagination: The Inchmarnock 'Hostage Stone'', in *West Over Sea: Studies in Scandinavian Sea-borne Expansion and Settlement before 1300: A Festschrift in Honour of Dr. Barbara E. Crawford*, ed. Beverley Ballin Smith, Simon Taylor, and Gareth Williams (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 61-3.

<sup>719</sup> Angus A. Somerville and R. Andrew McDonald, *The Vikings and Their Age* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2013), 24; Smith, 'Portable Christianity', 159-61.

<sup>720</sup> Bitel, 'Tools and Scripts for Cursing', 14.

<sup>721</sup> Moar and Stewart, 'Newly Discovered Sculptured Stones from Papil, Shetland', 93-5.

<sup>722</sup> See my discussion of *capsae* in chapter one.

<sup>723</sup> Quast, *Reliquienkästchen aus Ennabeuren*, 49; Ernest T. de Wald, 'Notes on the Tuotilo Ivories in St. Gall', *The Art Bulletin* 15, no. 3 (1933): 202-5.

Walafrid Strabo records this specific interaction in his nine-century *Vita sancti Galli abbatis in Alamannia*,

Sed vir sanctus cum comitem suum alto teneri somno putaret, surgens prostravit se in figuram crucis ante capsellam, et preces Domino devotas effudit. Interea descendens ursus de monte micas et fragmenta quae convivantibus deciderant, caute legebat. Hoc factum ut vidit homo Dei, dixit ad feram: Praecipio tibi, bestia, in nomine Domini, tolle lignum et mitte in ignem. Ad cuius praeceptum bellua conversa, validissimum lignum attulit, et igni injecit.<sup>724</sup>

The shrine depicted on the ivory panel is similar in form to Insular house-shaped shrines and is shown hanging from a cross, suggesting that portable shrines may have been suspended and venerated directly in addition to serving as travelling containers. Indeed, the precious metal used in the construction of Insular house-shaped shrines suggests that they were not simply used as containers but were meant to convey additional messages of power, spiritual or temporal, to their viewers. Moreover, recordings of interactions between saints and their portable shrines provide further evidence for how they were engaged with. Indeed, Peter Yeoman has recently brought the ninth-century St. Gallen Stiftsbibliothek, Cod. Sang. 555, *Vita sancti Columbae* to the attention of scholars, as it features a drawing of St Columbanus and two portable shrines [Figure 154]. The manuscript was produced at St Gall, possibly by Insular monks, sometime in the ninth century.<sup>725</sup> Yeoman suggests a ninth-century date for the drawing, which is found in the back of the manuscript, where it appears to be a secondary addition rather than a proper illumination.

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<sup>724</sup> 'But the holy man was settling while his young companion was in deep sleep, he got up and in the form of a cross he threw himself before the casket and devout prayers to the Lord poured out. Meanwhile, a bear came down the mountain and he cautiously gathered and feasted on the morsels and fragments that had fallen. When this happened and seeing the man of God, he said to the wild animal, 'In the name of God to you I direct and [command you] to lift up the wood and place it in the fire', Walafridus Strabo, *Vita sancti Galli abbatis in Alamannia*, ed. J.P. Migne, vol. 114, *Patrologia Latina* (Paris: Garnier et Migne, 1852), Col. 0987C-Col.88B.

<sup>725</sup> 'Earliest Image of St Columba Project', <http://www.socantscot.org/research-project/earliest-image-of-st-columba-project/>, accessed 20 March 2016.

However, the ornamentation and form of the two shrines depicted in the manuscript more likely suggest that the drawing is from a later, post-tenth-century period. The leftmost shrine is depicted with six circular mounts, three on the lid and three on the box; this type of ornamentation is found more on 'later' shrines such as the tenth-century panels from London [Figure 27], as opposed to the earlier Melhus shrine [Figure A.13], which only features three mounts. Moreover, the ridgepole depicted on the left shrine is not seen on any Insular house-shaped shrines, while the shrine on the right appears to be tiered in a manner more reminiscent of King Edgar's reliquary of St Swithun, possibly depicted on an eleventh or twelfth-century wall-painting, which was discovered in the Morley Library at Winchester Cathedral in 1909 [Figure 155].<sup>726</sup> The wall painting depicts the shrine, which overtly borrows architectural motifs in its shingled roof, as placed on an altar. Thus, it is important to pause before concluding that Insular house-shaped shrines and analogous containers were only used for transporting sacral matter, as they also could have been placed on altars or suspended and then directly venerated.

Because Insular and Continental monks were described as carrying sacral containers around their necks, some scholars cite depictions of possible suspended containers within Insular art as potential depictions of Insular house-shaped shrines. The figural illuminations of the Book of Deer, Cambridge University Library, MS li.6.32, provide a means of addressing how abstracted objects are categorised as satchels or house-shaped shrines. The tenth-century Book of Deer, which was presented to the University of Cambridge with the library of John Moore in 1715,

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<sup>726</sup> John Crook, 'King Edgar's Reliquary of St Swithun', *Anglo-Saxon England* 21 (1992): 189-90.

contains the four Latin Gospels and an office for the *viaticum*.<sup>727</sup> In the twelfth century a Latin charter by King David (1125–53) to Deer Abbey, a *vita* of St Drostan, and records of lands held by the Abbey written in Scottish-Gaelic were added to the manuscript.<sup>728</sup> The manuscript measures only 153 mm by 110 mm and contains 86 folios, each written or illuminated only on the verso, thus leading Dominic Marner to conclude that the Book of Deer was designed as a pocket Gospel.<sup>729</sup> The Gospel of Matthew ends at the Sermon on the Mount, Mark with a brief account of Christ's healing ministry ending before the raising of Lazarus, Luke shortly before the Temptation, and only the Book of John is fully recorded.<sup>730</sup> The completion of the Book of John has been described by Werner and Hughes as indicative of the Insular interest in John's Gospel in particular.<sup>731</sup> These small Gospel books would sometimes be worn around the necks of their owners as acts of piety or divine protection, as alluded in a letter from Alcuin of York to Ethelhard, archbishop of Canterbury, discussed in chapter one, 'Sed melius et in corde sanctorum imitare exempla, quam in sacculis portare ossa'.<sup>732</sup> Notably Alcuin refers to these items being carried in a bag or satchel (*sacculis*), suggesting that these containers were large enough to carry a variety of sacral matter and apotropaic Christian charms; this

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<sup>727</sup> Kenneth Jackson, *The Gaelic Notes in the Book of Deer* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972), 1-18; Márkus, 'Sick and the Dying', 67-97.

<sup>728</sup> Jane Geddes, 'The Art of Deer', *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland* 128 (1998): 537.

<sup>729</sup> Isabel Henderson, 'Understanding the Figurative Style and Decorative Programme of the Book of Deer', in *Studies on the Book of Deer*, ed. Katherine Forsyth (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2008), 32; Dominic Marner, 'The Sword of the Spirit, the Word of God and the Book of Deer', *Medieval Archaeology* 46, no. 1 (2002): 10-3.

<sup>730</sup> Henderson, 'Style and Decorative Programme of the Book of Deer', 32.

<sup>731</sup> Martin Werner, 'The Book of Durrow and the Question of Programme', *Anglo-Saxon England* 26 (1997): 30-9; Kathleen Hughes, 'The Book of Deer (Cambridge University Library MS. li. 6.32)', in *Celtic Britain in the Early Middle Ages: Studies in Scottish and Welsh Sources*, ed. David Dumville (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 1980), 35.

<sup>732</sup> 'It is better to copy the examples of the saints in the heart than to carry bones in bags' translated by Alcuin of York, *C. A.D. 732 to 804: His Life and Letters*, 69; Alcuinus, *Alcuni Epistolae*, 4, 448.



practice was so common it merited specific mention by Alcuin, and indeed Insular exegesis, history, and penitentials further corroborate Alcuin's description of this practice as widespread. However, the question remains whether this practice, or a similar act of devotion through the pious keeping of sacral matter, is depicted within Insular art, as scholars suggest in regard to the Book of Deer, and whether there was any deeper symbolism in these itinerant saints wearing portable containers around their necks.

In order to begin to answer that question, scholars such as Alexander, Hughes, and Geddes have all noted that the figural illuminations of fols. 1v, 16v, 29v, 41v, 84v, and 86v could represent figures holding or wearing either reliquaries or books.<sup>733</sup> Geddes points to the composition and alignment of the rectangular forms situated near the chests of the figures on fol. 1v [Figure 156.A] as representative of satchels or 'house shrines tucked under the carrier's chin'.<sup>734</sup> Kenneth Jackson compares these illuminations to the Monymusk shrine.<sup>735</sup> One such alleged house-shaped shrine is supposedly depicted by three thick lines which descend from the chin of the figure on fol. 16v [Figure 156.B]. While it is not apparent whether this figure is holding the alleged shrine, the figure on fol. 29v [Figure 156.C] is shown with arms outstretched and similar shapes underneath the chin. Furthermore, Geddes specifically calls attention to the 'scale' effect depicted on the 'roof' of these objects. However, this reading of both a roof and the accompanying shingle-like design does not account for either the stylisation utilised throughout the manuscript—a horizontal scale effect is also used on the clothing of figures on fol. 41v [Figure 156.D]—nor

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<sup>733</sup> Jonathan Alexander, *Insular Manuscripts: 6th to the 9th Century* (London: H. Miller, 1978), 87; Hughes, 'Book of Deer', 28; Geddes, 'The Art of Deer', 537-9.

<sup>734</sup> 'The Art of Deer', 38.

<sup>735</sup> Jackson, *Gaelic Notes in the Book of Deer*, 10.

does it compare the figures to the shape and ornament of surviving Insular house-shaped shrines, which do not have scales or tiles on their lids. While Geddes and Jackson suggest that the figures could be holding house-shaped shrines, Dominic Marner and Isabel Henderson regard the shapes depicted as indicative of satchels or book shrines and do not mention or suggest house-shaped shrines.<sup>736</sup> Indeed, if the figures were depicted wearing Insular house-shaped shrines frontally, as indicated by the stance of the figures, the hip-roof of the house-shaped shrines would be seen; the triangular shape Geddes reads as a roof would need to be trapezoidal if it was a faithful depiction of an Insular house-shaped shrine. As the Book of Deer was specifically designed for movement, perhaps the figures are directly referencing the wearing of pocket Gospels like the Book of Deer itself.<sup>737</sup> The triangular roof of the alleged house-shrines of fol. 29v is far more in keeping with a depiction of negative space above a square or rectangular satchel than with a trapezoidal-roofed house-shaped shrine.

As Alcuin observes, monks could carry a variety of objects in a bag. While book satchels are discussed in early medieval literature and may have been depicted on monumental stonework, their use may not have been relegated to carrying only religious texts.<sup>738</sup> Bernard Meehan notes that the Breac Maodhóg [Figure 29] was larger than its fifteenth-century satchel [Figure 157], which shows signs of having been stretched to accommodate the older shrine. Despite this later date, the possibility for re-used and multi-functional satchels appears probable, and Alcuin's

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<sup>736</sup> Marner, 'Sword of the Spirit', 13-4; Henderson, 'Style and Decorative Programme of the Book of Deer', 57.

<sup>737</sup> Márkus, 'Sick and the Dying', 68.

<sup>738</sup> Meehan, 'Book Satchels', 87-90.

complaint suggests that this was the case.<sup>739</sup> Moreover, the re-use of a leather satchel for the Breac Maodhóg again touches on the fluid nature of containers for sacral matter in the medieval period, as discussed in chapter one. However, finding contemporary depictions of satchels, book-shrines, or small wearable sacral containers on Insular stonework is more difficult, primarily due to weathering and what appears to be a greater interest in depicting ecclesiastical figures with crosiers and bells.<sup>740</sup>

Even so, O'Donoghue suggests a house-shaped shrine was depicted on the West Cross of Kilfenora [Figure 158.A-B]. The West Cross of Kilfenora, described as Romanesque in design, has been dated from the twelfth century by Harbison, rendering O'Donoghue's use of the cross as an exemplar somewhat at odds with the dating of Insular house-shaped shrines, which have been typically dated no later than the tenth century. Regarding its ornament, the West cross at Kilfenora depicts Christ with arms outstretched on the cross and with a small square object on his chest.<sup>741</sup> Cronin simply states that Christ is 'depicted with a square panel, perhaps a book satchel or reliquary', and Harbison reaches a similar sentiment, 'he carries a square 'satchel (?) or reliquary (?), suspended from his neck by crossing bands'.<sup>742</sup> In their discussions of the cross, neither Fergus O'Farrell nor James Lang offers further

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<sup>739</sup> Ibid., 85.

<sup>740</sup> Bitel, 'Tools and Scripts for Cursing', 6.

<sup>741</sup> Peter Harbison, 'The Otherness of Irish Art in the Twelfth Century', in *From Ireland Coming: Irish Art from the Early Christian to the Late Gothic Period and its European Context*, ed. Colum Hourihane (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), 116-30; Etienne Rynne, 'A Fourth High Cross at Tuam', *Journal of the Galway Archaeological and Historical Society* 40 (1985): 124-9; Harbison, *High Crosses of Ireland*, vol. 1, 155-6.

<sup>742</sup> Rhoda Cronin, 'Late High Crosses of Munster: Tradition and Novelty in Twelfth-Century Art', in *Early Medieval Munster: Archaeology, History, and Society*, ed. Michael A. and John Sheehan Monk (Cork: Cork University Press, 1998), 144-6; Harbison, *High Crosses of Ireland*, vol. 1, 116.

options for what Christ may be wearing.<sup>743</sup> For comparison, the North Cross at Downpatrick, Co. Down is a fragmented High Cross that depicts a bishop, cleric, or abbot holding a drop-headed crosier in his right hand, while his left holds a shrine across his chest [Figure 159]; the shrine is decorated with finials or terminals reminiscent of a fragmented butterfly terminal from the National Museum of Ireland [Figure 160.A-B] and some Insular house-shaped shrine ridgepoles. The damaged state of the cross prevents a definitive reading of the finials or terminals; however, unlike the West Cross at Kilfenora cited by O'Donoghue, the North Cross at Downpatrick explicitly depicts a figure wearing or holding a shrine across their chest.

Moreover, unlike the West Cross at Kilfenora, some stone monuments from Scotland provide further examples contemporary with Insular house-shaped shrines. Similar square forms are depicted on Insular monuments such as the Pictish cross slab St Vigean's No. 7 [Figure 161]; St Vigean's is itself a possible site of royal patronage similar to the Irish sites discussed above.<sup>744</sup> On Vigean's No. 7, the bottom left panel depicts a figure wearing a square object around his neck, similar in form to the Papil stone from Shetland and the West Cross at Kilfenora.<sup>745</sup> Quast suggests these squares depict containers in more general terms, allowing the sculptures to

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<sup>743</sup> Fergus O'Farrell, 'St. Patrick's Cross, Cashel: A Re-Assessment', *The Journal of the Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland* 136 (2006): 102-5; James T. Lang, 'Survival and Revival in Insular Art: Some Principles', in *The Insular Tradition*, ed. Catherine E. Karkov, Michael Ryan, and Robert T. Farrell (Albany: State University of New York, 1997), 65-8.

<sup>744</sup> Thomas Clancy, 'The Drosten Stone: A New Reading', *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland* 123 (1993): 346-7; Henderson and Henderson, *Art of the Picts*, 83.

<sup>745</sup> *Art of the Picts*, 11; Harbison, *High Crosses of Ireland*, vol. 1, 38; John Borland, 'Understanding What We See, or Seeing What We Understand: Graphic Recording, Past and Present, of the Early Medieval Sculpture at St Vigean's', in *Able Minds and Practiced Hands*, ed. Sally Foster and Morag Cross (Leeds: Maney, 2005), 201-14.

draw on a variety of objects connected to monastic life, such as the book and chrismal.<sup>746</sup>

The square object hanging from Christ's neck on the West Cross of Kilfenora does not display the proportions exhibited by house-shrines, nor is it fitted with a roof or decorative terminals. Still, O'Donoghue uses the West Cross to argue that house-shaped shrines are Eucharistic vessels, as he argues that Christ would be more likely to wear a chrismal than a reliquary around his neck because the latter would 'constitute a very interesting artistic and theological proposition'.<sup>747</sup> O'Donoghue equates the chrismal with the preservation of the Eucharist exclusively, as opposed to the multivalent interpretation which I proposed in chapter one; thus, he finds the figure of Christ wearing a reliquary to be theologically problematic. However, the presence of capstones at Clonmacnoise and Monasterboice, possibly depicting the form of a church, along with the discrepancies shown between house-shaped shrines and the square shape at the centre of Christ's chest, render O'Donoghue's reading of a house-shaped shrine on the West Cross of Kilfenora unlikely. Moreover, describing the square on Christ's chest as a book satchel or book shrine follows the description of Christ as the Word of God as written in John 1:1. Finally, O'Donoghue does not consider the wider context of early medieval sacral containers from the Continent outside of the 'Chur chrismal' [Figure 74.A]; the Namur shrine [Figure 75.A] depicts the Crucifixion, and its constructional elements suggest the shrine was probably exclusively used as a reliquary, thereby demonstrating that placing Christ on a reliquary would not appear to cause the redundancy O'Donoghue suggests. Indeed, Christ was not only the paschal lamb and anointed king, but also served a priestly

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<sup>746</sup> Quast, *Reliquienkästchen aus Ennabeuren*, 45-9.

<sup>747</sup> O'Donoghue, 'Insular Chrismals and House-Shaped Shrines', 91.

function as well.<sup>748</sup> All of these roles are well-suited for the carrying or displaying of a wide variety of sacral matter and their containers, and this is echoed across Insular monumental sculpture, as these objects were deeply rooted in the monastic life.

Finally, it is important to question whether the layering of sacral containers over the chest as indicated in Insular exegesis and perhaps on monumental sculpture further denotes the importance of physically touching these containers and specifically how the chest or heart was a location of spiritual wisdom and knowledge.<sup>749</sup> Visually directing the viewer to the chests of figures depicted on early medieval metalwork, on monumental sculpture, and in illuminated manuscripts could both serve functionalist compositional issues by keeping the figures self-contained within limited spaces, but also serve to visually align the figure with metaphorical and spiritual messages represented by the objects to which they gesture or which they hold. Even when not directing the viewer to the chest, figures holding crosiers and bells have been linked to ecclesiastical concerns of power and monastic privilege, whereby sureties were sworn on objects that were dual relic and symbol of office.<sup>750</sup> Additionally, scenes in which Evangelists hold or gesture to their Gospels link them to their spiritual products, but so too does the gesture and overall composition

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<sup>748</sup> Griffin Murray, 'The Makers of Church Metalwork in Early Medieval Ireland: Their Identity and Status', in *Making Histories: Proceedings of the Sixth International Conference on Insular Art*, ed. Jane Hawkes (Donington: Shaun Tyas, 2011), 169; Michael W Herren and Shirley Ann Brown, *Christ in Celtic Christianity: Britain and Ireland from the Fifth to the Tenth Century* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2002), 137-85.

<sup>749</sup> This section is deeply informed and inspired by Heather Pulliam's work on the chest as a seat of knowledge, first presented at Kalamazoo in 2007. Since then, Pulliam presented "Gilding the Lily: Ornamenting the Crucified Christ in Insular Art" in April 2010 at the Croch Saithir: Envisioning Christ on the Cross, a conference at University College Cork. She also an article in progress provisionally entitled, 'Fleshy Tablets of the Heart: The Evangelist, the Book and the Crucified Logos in Insular Art'.

<sup>750</sup> Lucas, 'Social Role of Relics and Reliquaries', 21-8.

emphasise the visual and religious centrality of their texts in Christian life and thought.<sup>751</sup>

When accounting for early medieval conceptualisations of memory and the physicality of reading, holding or carrying things near the body, especially near the chest, mouth, or stomach, could evoke ‘muscular memory of the words pronounced and an aural memory of the words heard’.<sup>752</sup> Jean Leclercq writes that this practice was ‘sometimes described by use of the theme of spiritual nutrition. In this case, the vocabulary is borrowed from eating, from digestion, and from the particular form of digestion belonging to ruminants. For this reason, reading and meditation are sometimes described by the very expressive word rumination’.<sup>753</sup> Spiritual digestion, much like its physical counterpart, began by spiritually or metaphorically consuming the teaching and processing it through the body.<sup>754</sup> Indeed, Augustine of Hippo further describes how the heart was central to speaking spiritual truths,

nam paulo post de hac re discipulis suis: adhuc et vos, inquit, sine intellectu estis? Non intellegitis quia omne quod in os intrat in ventrem vadit et in secessum emittitur? Hic certe apertissime demonstravit os corporis. At in eo quod sequitur os cordis ostendens: quae autem procedunt, inquit, de ore de corde exeunt et ea coinquant hominem. De corde enim exeunt cogitationes malae, et cetera.<sup>755</sup>

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<sup>751</sup> Martin Werner, ‘The Four Evangelist Symbols Page in the Book of Durrow’, *Gesta* 8 (1969): 11.

<sup>752</sup> Jean Leclercq, *The Love of Learning and the Desire for God: A Study of Monastic Culture*, trans. Catharine Misrahi (New York: Fordham University Press, 1982), 72-3.

<sup>753</sup> Ibid., 73.

<sup>754</sup> Beda Venerabilis, *In Cantica caniticorum libri vi*, 119B, Book: 5, Chapter: 7, Line: 594; Augustinus Hipponensis, *Sermones de vetere testamento*, ed. C. Lambot, vol. 41, Corpus Christianorum Series Latina (Turnhout: Brepols Publishers, 1961), Semon: 149, Col: 801, Line: 37.

<sup>755</sup> ‘For shortly after this matter he says to his disciples, ‘are you still without understanding? Do you not understand, that whatever enter in at the mouth goes into the belly, and is cast out of the body?’ Certainly, here he clearly drew attention to the mouth of the body. But in that which follows He shows it to be the mouth of the heart: ‘But these things which proceed’, He says, ‘from the mouth of the heart comes from the heart and they defile the man. Out of the heart comes evil thoughts, etc’, *De trinitate*, ed. W. J. Mountain and F. Glorie, vol. 50A, Corpus Christianorum Series Latina (Turnhout: Brepols Publishers, 1968), Book: 15, Chapter: 10, Line: 43-9.

As such, *ruminatio*, whether aided by visual, oral, or aural clues, was intimately connected to the physical bodies of those present and deeply related to themes of consumption, digestion, and speech.<sup>756</sup>

Depictions of objects such as books and satchels situated near the chest are found across Britain and Ireland. Similar to the figure of Christ on the West Cross at Kilfenora, there is an Anglo-Saxon tenth-century cross at Holy Trinity, Stonegrave, England that also depicts a figure wearing a satchel, albeit on the cross shaft [Figure 162]. Lang describes the figure as ‘Celtic’, drawing on Roe’s work on the ‘orans holding the book’ and discusses how ‘Stonegrave may have been an ecclesiastical island within the Ryedale settlements with monastic or church links reaching westwards across the north of England to Ireland and Galloway’.<sup>757</sup> As Christ is shown above, the lower figure is interpreted as a member of the clerical community.<sup>758</sup> Additionally, while the monuments of Papil and Vigeans are perhaps the best examples of sculpture depicting ecclesiastical figures wearing satchels, monuments found at Ardchattan Priory, near the north shore of Lough Etive; in Downie Hills, near Panmure House four miles north of Carnoustie; and Elgin Cathedral, near the River Lossie depict figures holding books or perhaps wearing satchels [Figures 163-5].<sup>759</sup> Similarly, a small pillar in Carndonagh at Co. Donegal depicts an ecclesiastical figure holding a bell in one hand and a book or satchel in the other while standing above a crosier [Figure 166]. The pillar may potentially have

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<sup>756</sup>Carol Farr, ‘History and Mnemonic in Insular Gospel Book Decoration’, in *From the Isles of the North: Early Medieval Art in Ireland and Britain*, ed. Cormac Bourke (Belfast: HMSO, 1995), 137-41.

<sup>757</sup>Roe, ‘Orans in Irish Christian Art’, 212-21; James T. Lang, *Corpus of Anglo-Saxon Stone Sculpture: York and Eastern Yorkshire*, vol. 3 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), 216.

<sup>758</sup>Margaret Firby and James Lang, ‘The Pre-Conquest Sculpture at Stonegrave’, *Yorkshire Archaeological Journal* 53 (1981): 23-8.

<sup>759</sup>J. Romilly Allen and Joseph Anderson, *The Early Christian Monuments of Scotland* (Balgavies, Forfar: Pinkfoot, 1993), 377-8, 252-4, 135-6.



been a boundary marker, and as such the inclusion of so many symbols of office and, indeed, potential relics would have visually announced the spiritual and temporary power of the church to visitors and residents alike.<sup>760</sup>

By visually emphasising the chests of figures, artists could have been drawing on the rich exegesis mentioned above as well as the biblical priestly breastplate of Old Testament high priests, thought to be mirrored in some aspects of contemporary ecclesiastical vestments, while the recitations of *loricae* and the image of Christ on the Cross pierced by the spear of Longinus may have all combined to create a motif rich in ornament and meaning.<sup>761</sup> One notable example of the ornamentation of Christ's chest is found on a cross or altar fragment known as the Calf of Man Crucifix, which was discovered by John Quayle sometime before 1790 in a ruined chapel on the Isle of Man [Figure 167].<sup>762</sup> Christ is shown covered with a robe decorated with small diagonal lines, pellets, and 'heavy cords'.<sup>763</sup> A small circle, itself surrounded by a ring of interlace, is set into Christ's chest; below are a triquetra and a double spiral. P. C. M. Kermode describes the interlace sections as reminiscent of brooches and buckles and further compares the ornament of Christ's clothing to small metal plates held by the National Museum of Ireland that also depict geometric ornament over Christ's chest [Figure 168]. Kermode also draws heavily from Romilly Allen's description of the similarities between the panel and the cross.<sup>764</sup> However, neither Kermode nor Romilly discusses any potential symbolism

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<sup>760</sup> Peter Harbison, 'A Group of Early Christian Carved Stone Monuments in County Donegal', in *Early Medieval Sculpture in Britain and Ireland*, ed. John Higgitt (Oxford: BAR, 1965), 57.

<sup>761</sup> See chapter three for a discussion of this theme in relation to *kairos*.

<sup>762</sup> P. M. C. Kermode, *Manx Crosses* (Balgavies: Pinkfoot Press, 1994), 125.

<sup>763</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>764</sup> *Ibid.*; J. Romilly Allen, *Early Christian Symbolism in Great Britain and Ireland Before the Thirteenth Century* (London: Whiting & Co., 1887), 138-40.

imbedded in the ornament on Christ's chest or the similarities between the Calf of Man Crucifix, the Bronze Crucifix found at Athlone, and the other similar motifs in metalwork or brooches. Notably, the Hunterston brooch [Figure 85.B], an eighth-century penannular brooch, is decorated on both sides; the back features two panels of ornamentation similar to that of the Manx cross [Figure 167] and that found on the Bologna [Figure 23.C], Clonmore [Figure 10.B], and Ranvaik shrines [Figure 19.B], suggesting a connection between wearing these objects over the chest and the importance of the heart as a seat of spiritual wisdom, as exemplified by Christ.<sup>765</sup>

The importance of Christ's chest is further typified in the exegesis on a scene during the Last Supper, during which St John reclines on Christ's chest. Alcuin of York explained the significance of this interaction in his *Commentaria in sancti Iohannis evangelium* thus, 'Neque enim frustra in coena mystica supra pectus Iesu recubuisse perhibetur; sed per hoc verissime docetur quia coelestis haustum sapientiae caeteris excellentius de sanctissimo eiusdem pectoris fonte potaverit'.<sup>766</sup> While it is possible Insular house-shaped shrines could have been carried or worn on the body in a variety of ways, their placement over the hearts of their owners would have not only served basic functional needs, such as protecting the shrine and its contents from accidental damage, but they also protected the wearer with the shrine's apotropaic powers while simultaneously reminding the wearer of the importance of the body in the reception of divine mysteries.

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<sup>765</sup> Kermode, *Manx Crosses*, 127; Blackwell, 'Iconography of the Hunterston Brooch and Related Medieval Material', 231-48.

<sup>766</sup> 'Not without cause the mysteries, it is said 'reclining on Jesus's chest' in the Last Supper, but through this truly it is taught that a draft of heavenly wisdom, most excellent, holiest, he drank from that same font of the chest', Alcuinus, *Commentaria in sancti Iohannis evangelium*, ed. J. P. Migne, vol. 100, *Patrologia Latina* (Paris: Garnier et Migne, 1863), ep. ad Gislam et Rodtrudam, Col.: 743, Line: 9.

## The Earthly Church as the Heavenly Temple

To more fully answer why Insular house-shaped shrines may have been constructed to allude to churches, we must synthesise the above with both the archaeology of Insular churches and how their structure and space were conceptualised. Æthelwulf's *De abbatibus*, a Latin poem addressed to Ecgbert, Bishop of Lindisfarne sometime between 803–21, provides insight not only into the history of Æthelwulf's monastery but also into the interior of Anglo-Saxon churches.<sup>767</sup> After recounting how the brothers of the church are called to prayer, Æthelwulf describes the interior of the church as awash with the heavenly light coming through the windows, where it and the lights inside mix to illuminate the interior,

Plurima cum sancti sunt ornamenta delubri  
hic tamen haec paucis liceat memorare canendo. Delubri  
ut celum rutilat stellis fulgentibus omne,  
sic tremulas vibrant subter testudine templi  
ordinibus variis funalia pendula flammæ.  
Mentibus haec placidis quedam cum tempore preisco  
attribuere deo, quedam proceresque moderni  
iam super acuta piis curabant reddere donis.  
Nam plures mutli cupiebant pendere caucis,  
limpida qui tribuant quadrato lumina templo,  
ast alii rutilo condunt vexilla metallo,  
que veneranda pii promunt miracula Christi,  
qui crucis in lingo mundum de morte redemit.<sup>768</sup>

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<sup>767</sup> H. M. Taylor, 'The Architectural Interest of Æthelwulf's *De Abbatibus*', *Anglo-Saxon England* 3 (1974): 163–73; 'The Position of the Altar in Early Anglo-Saxon Churches', *The Antiquaries Journal* 53, no. 01 (1973): 52–8.

<sup>768</sup> 'Since the ornaments of the blessed shrine are many, let it be allowed to me as I sing to mention the following briefly. As the whole sky shines with gleaming stars, so beneath the roof of the church hanging torches dangle their tremulous flames in a number of rows. Some of them men of gentle mind gave to God in early times, others recent abbots in our times were at pains to give as additions in pious donations. Many men wished to hang up numerous bowls, which would give soft light in the rectangular church, and other set up ensigns of shining metal, which present the revered miracles of the holy Christ, who redeemed the world from death on the wood of the cross', translation in *Æthelwulf De abbatibus*, trans. Alistair Campbell (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1967), Chapter 20, p. 50–1.

Æthelwulf goes on to describe the ornamentation of books, the altar, and even liturgical items such as chalices, while broadly alluding to their materiality in relation to themes, discussed in chapter four, of pious gift-giving and the incorruptibility and glory of Christ. Specifically, Æthelwulf refers to the structure of the church as *domus*, *templum*, and *delubrum*; these first two terms Aldhelm equated with his chrisma just a century earlier. *Delubrum* is more complicated in its etymology and usage than *templum* and *domus*, but *delubrum* was primarily used to denote religious structures and locations, both pagan and Christian. Æthelwulf's use of the term *delubrum* may be a way of showing not only his knowledge of alternative terms but also a means of linking the church with connotations of ritual cleansing and purification.<sup>769</sup> From Æthelwulf's poetic vision, we can more fully appreciate why the interior of Aldhelm's *domus*- or *templum*-shaped container teems with light, as Æthelwulf describes an actual Anglo-Saxon church in markedly similar terms.

Indeed, Bede ends his homily on John 2:12–22 by telling his audience to see within the building of the biblical Temple the mysteries of the New Testament,

Haec de factura templi pauca ex pluribus commemorasse sufficiat ut quam cuncta spiritali intellectu refulgeant clarius appareat. Sed finituri sermonem redeamus ad domini sententiam qua quaerentibus signum iudaeis dicit: soluete templum hoc, et in tribus diebus excitabo illud; agamus que gratias misericordiae eius qui mysterium suae passionis et excitationis a mortuis quod temptantibus se infidelibus clauso sermone proposuit nobis iam in se credentibus clara luce reseravit. Et quia iam prope est tempus quod solutionem eiusdem templi venerabilis quae facta est a perfidis simul et excitationem quam ipse tertia die sicut promisit mirabiliter exhibuit annua sollemnitate celebrare desideramus mundemus templa corporum cordium que nostrorum ut spiritus dei habitare dignetur in nobis et iuxta quod apostolus ammonet, abiectis operibus tenebrarum induamus nos arma lucis sicut in die honeste ambulemus non in comessationibus et ebrietatibus non in cubilibus et in pudicitia non in contentione et aemulatione sed induamus nos dominum Iesum Christum qui

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<sup>769</sup> J. F. Niermeyer and C. Van de Kieft, *Mediae Latinitatis Lexicon Minus: A-L*, vol. 1 (Boston: Brill, 2002), 416.

cum patre vivit et regnat deus in unitate spiritus sancti ante omnia saecula  
saeculorum. Amen.<sup>770</sup>

Not only does Bede speak to the multivalent symbol of the Temple, which here includes a direct reference to the physical bodies of the faithful, but he also calls on them to wear the armour of Christ in all its shining glory. With chapter four's discussion of the materiality and ornament of Insular house-shaped shrines in mind, similar messages of protection as well as the Heavenly Jerusalem may have been included in the use of the highly reflective tinned and gilt copper alloys on Insular house-shaped shrines, which may have also been worn on the chest of their keepers and, in this sense, perhaps acted similarly to the protective *loricae* discussed in the previous chapters.

When considering the form of Insular house-shaped shrines, Anderson goes on to say that 'it is not known why these shrines were made after this particular pattern', while Blindheim and Crawford simply note the similarity between the form of the Temple of the Book of Kells and house-shaped shrines.<sup>771</sup> However, the

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<sup>770</sup> 'Let this brief recounting of a few out of the many details of the building of the temple suffice, so that it may appear more clearly how all [the details] shine brightly with spiritual understanding. But I am about to conclude my sermon, let me return to our Lord's words, wherein he said to the Jews who were seeking a sign, 'Destroy this temple, and within three days I will raise it up.' Let us give thanks for his mercy in imparting clearly to us who now believe in him [the meaning of] the mystery of his passion and his being raised from the dead, which he proposed at the close of his discourse to the unbelievers who were tempting him. The time is now near where we desire to celebrate the yearly solemnity of the destruction of the venerable temple, brought about by those who lacked faith, and also [the solemnity of] his being raised, which he himself manifested in a marvellous way on the third day as he had promised. Let us then cleanse the temples of our bodies and hearts, so that the Spirit of God may deign to dwell in us; and as the Apostle advises, having cast aside the works of darkness, let us put on the armour of light; let us walk honourably as in the daylight, not with revelry and drunkenness, not with debauchery and licentiousness, not with quarrelling and jealousy, but let us put on our Lord Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with the Father in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God before all ages of ages. Amen', translation in *Bede the Venerable: Homilies on the Gospels, Book Two, Lent to the Dedication of the Church*, trans. Lawrence T. Martin and David Hurst (Kalamazoo: Cistercian Publications, 1991), 11-2; *Beda Venerabilis, Homiliarum evangelii libri ii*, ed. D. Hurst, vol. 122, Corpus Christianorum Series Latina (Turnhout: Brepols Publishers, 1955), Book: 2, Homily: 1, Line: 275-94.

<sup>771</sup> Crawford, 'A Descriptive List of Irish Shrines', 81-6; Blindheim, 'A House-Shaped Irish-Scots Reliquary', 3-5.

question remained: why would one want to depict shrines as the Church or Temple?

The answer lies in the richness of the Temple of Jerusalem for early Christian

exegesis.<sup>772</sup> Eusebius of Caesarea wrote on the restoration of the Cathedral of Tyre in

his *Historia ecclesiastica*; for his work on the church, Eusebius describes Paulinus as

both a second Solomon and Zerubbabel before he moves to compare various parts of

the basilica to the faithful.<sup>773</sup> Other early Christian writers, such as Maximus the

Confessor, wrote that the basilica could represent the microcosm of the universe and

that not only were individuals part of a universal Church, but also that their physical

bodies could be seen as churches or temples due to the indwelling of the Holy Spirit

within the physical body of the faithful.<sup>774</sup> In Augustine of Hippo's influential *De*

*civitate Dei*, he explores the connection, historically and allegorically, between the

Temple and Jerusalem, which for Augustine is both historical and eternal, 'locus

ergo iste, qui promittitur tam pacatae ac securae habitationis, aeternus est aeternis

que debetur in matre Hierusalem libera, ubi erit veraciter populus Israel; hoc enim

nomen interpretatur "videns deum"; cuius praemii desiderio pia per fidem vita in hac

aerumnosa peregrinatione ducenda est'.<sup>775</sup> Jerome's *Tractatus lix in psalmos* likewise

proclaims deep spiritual mysteries are present in the building of the Temple,

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<sup>772</sup> For an overview of the role of the Temple in Christian exegesis and art see, Joseph Gutmann, *The Temple of Solomon: Archaeological Fact and Medieval Tradition in Christian Islamic and Jewish Art* (Missoula: Scholars Press, 1976); Ousterhout, 'Temple, the Sepulchre, and the Martyrion'; Conor O'Brien, *Bede's Temple: An Image and Its Interpretation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015); *The Imagined and Real Jerusalem in Art and Architecture*, ed. Jeroen Goudeau, Mariëtte Verhoeven, and Wouter Weijers (Leiden: Brill, 2014).

<sup>773</sup> Chapter X.IV, *Eusebius—the Church History: A New Translation with Commentary*, ed. Paul L. Maier (Grand Rapids: Kregel Academic, 1999), 347.

<sup>774</sup> Deno J Geanakoplos, 'Some Aspects of the Influence of the Byzantine Maximus the Confessor on the Theology of East and West', *Church History* 38, no. 2 (1969): 155-63.

<sup>775</sup> 'Therefore, the place which is promised so much peaceful and secure habitation is eternal and belongs eternally to the free mother Jerusalem, where the true people of Israel will be; For this name is interpreted "Seeing God"; the desire of whose prize through a pious life is to be led through faith in this suffering pilgrimage', Augustinus Hipponensis, *De civitate Dei*, ed. B. Dombart and A. Kalb, vol. 47-8, Corpus Christianorum Series Latina (Turnhout: Brepols Publishers, 1955), Book: 17, Chapter: 13, Line: 23.

‘hucusque videtur finitum esse mysterium: audite maiora mysteria. “Et qui praeerant inquit, istis operibus et templo, tria milia erant.” Non possunt esse maiores, et qui praesunt operibus, nisi illi qui praedicant trinitatem’.<sup>776</sup>

Turning to Insular writers, Bede, in his discussion of allegory in *De schematibus et tropis*, speaks to how the Temple signifies the bodies of the faithful, Christ, the Church, and heavenly joy,

Nonnumquam in uno eodem que re vel verbo historia simul et mysticus de cristo sive ecclesia sensus et tropologia et anagoge figuraliter intimatur, ut: templum domini iuxta historiam domus quam fecit salomon; iuxta allegoriam corpus dominicum de quo ait: ‘soluite templum hoc, et in tribus diebus excitabo illud’, sive ecclesia eius, cui dicitur: ‘templum enim dei sanctum est, quod estis vos’; per tropologiam quisque fidelium, quibus dicitur: ‘an nescitis quia corpora vestra templum est spiritus sancti qui in vobis est’; per anagogen supernae gaudia mansionis, cui suspirabat qui ait: ‘beati qui habitant in domo tua, domine; in saeculum saeculi laudabunt te’.<sup>777</sup>

When one takes the importance of the Temple and the subsequent Latin terms of *domus* and *templum* into account, Aldhelm’s use of the same terms to describe his chrismal is striking; these two terms would likely have evoked the rich symbolism of the Temple so often discussed by late-antique and early medieval writers. While Aldhelm does not produce a systematic examination of the Temple and its

<sup>776</sup> ‘This surely is the height of mystery, but hear of even deeper mysteries! ‘And the overseers over the works and the temple, were three thousand.’ They cannot be greater, not even the overseers in charge of the work, except that they proclaim the Trinity’, translation in *The Homilies of Saint Jerome, Volume 1 (1–59 on the Psalms)* trans. Sister Marie Liguori Ewald (Detroit: Catholic University of America Press, 1964), 152-3; Hieronymus, *Tractatus lix in psalmos*, ed. G. Morin, vol. 78, Corpus Christianorum Series Latina (Turnhout: Brepols Publishers, 1958), Psalm: 89, Line: 174-6.

<sup>777</sup> ‘Frequently by one and the same word, or historical event, the mystical sense concerning Christ of the Church, the tropological, and the anagogical are all at the same time figuratively designated. According to historical fact the temple of the Lord is the house which Solomon built; allegorically it is the body of the Lord, about which he said: ‘Destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it up.’ Or it is his church, which was addressed as follows: ‘For the temple of God is holy, and such are ye.’ Through the tropological interpretation it signifies some one of the loyal men, who are addressed as follows: ‘Know ye not that ye are a temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?’ Through the anagogical interpretation it signifies the joys of heavenly dwelling for which that man longed, who said: ‘Blessed are they that dwell in thy house. They will be praising thee’, translation by Gussie Hecht Tanenhaus, ‘Bede’s de schematibus et tropis—A translation’, *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 48, no. 3 (1962): 252; Bede Venerabilis, *De schematibus et tropis*, ed. C. B. Kendall, vol. 123A, Corpus Christianorum Series Latina (Turnhout: Brepols Publishers, 1975), Chapter: 2, Line: 253.

symbolism, Bede, a contemporary of Aldhelm, devotes three exegetical texts, along with three homilies and numerous other references in his extended opus, to the importance of the biblical Temple and Tabernacle.

Bede's writings on the Temple and Tabernacle were a significant contribution to early-Christian exegesis and thought, as it was the first 'to produce verse-by-verse commentaries on the portions of Exodus and 1 Kings in which those buildings are described; and the first to differentiate between the spiritual meaning of the tabernacle and that of the temple and then attempt to relate them to one another in a systematic fashion'.<sup>778</sup> As Holder argues, Bede 'did not understand allegory as an all-purpose mode of interpretation to be employed at the whim of the interpreter with any object whatsoever, but as the normal and proper way of reading Holy Writ'.<sup>779</sup> However, Bede's reluctance to allegorise contemporary churches did not stop artists or other writers from imagining what the Temple may have looked like, nor from using its symbolism.<sup>780</sup> Regarding the visual sources from which Bede drew, in both *De tabernaculo* and *De templo*, Bede refers to the illustrations from the now-lost Codex Gradoir. A copy of this image from the Codex Gradoir depicting the Tabernacle appears in the Codex Amiatinus, Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana, MS Amiatinus 1, which originated in Wearmouth-Jarrow sometime within the last decade of the seventh century [Figure 169].<sup>781</sup> Sources visual and textual influenced the artists tasked with representing the Temple and Tabernacle, and, as Stanley

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<sup>778</sup> Arthur G. Holder, 'Allegory and History in Bede's Interpretation of Sacred Architecture', *The American Benedictine Review* 40, no. 2 (1989): 119-20.

<sup>779</sup> Ibid., 131.

<sup>780</sup> O'Brien, *Bede's Temple*, 193.

<sup>781</sup> Jennifer O'Reilly, 'The Library of Scripture: Views from Vivarium and Wearmouth-Jarrow', in *New Offerings, Ancient Treasures: Essays in Medieval Art for George Henderson*, ed. Paul Binski and William Noel (Stroud: Sutton, 2001), 3-7; Paul Meyvaert, 'Bede, Cassiodorus, and the Codex Amiatinus', *Speculum* 71, no. 04 (1996): 827-83.



Ferber observes, 'the artists had to work within the framework of known forms so that they would be recognized by his audience, while at the same time imbuing them with a contextual meaning that separated them from their non-Christian sources'.<sup>782</sup> Thus, it is highly likely that representations or allusions to the Temple and Tabernacle followed contemporary visual analogues rather than provide a faithful representation of the two structures from biblical texts.

## Conclusion

Insular house-shaped shrines can be understood as visual references, albeit stylised references, to architecture, namely, churches, oratories, and possibly tomb-shrines. Through these connections, Insular house-shaped shrines can thus be related to the biblical Temple and Tabernacle, which is supported by the illumination of the Temptation page in the Book of Kells. This connection was imbedded in the forms of the shrines and, as architecture progressed, the references to the Temple changed to reflect more local structures; we see this in the St Albans Psalter, Dombibliothek Hildesheim, MS St Godehard 1, fol. 35v [Figure 170] and in other twelfth-century manuscripts such as the Trinity College, MS 117 (E.I.40), fol. 55r, which shows St Germanus with his *capsulla* reimagined as an architectural shrine with motifs contemporary to twelfth-century church architecture [Figure 171].<sup>783</sup> Additionally, similar shrine forms have been identified within Insular art, all of which show that Insular house-shaped shrines and analogous shrine forms were likely understood as

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<sup>782</sup> Stanley Ferber, 'The Temple of Solomon in Early Christian and Byzantine Art', in *The Temple of Solomon: Archaeological Fact and Medieval Tradition in Christian, Islamic and Jewish Art*, ed. Joseph Gutmann (Missoula: Scholars Press, 1976), 23-4.

<sup>783</sup> Nigel J. Morgan, *Early Gothic Manuscripts* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982), 130-3.

references to local church architecture. Due to the Church's relationship with the ancient Temple of Solomon, its current incarnation, and its eschatological counterpart, these themes were likely part of the meaning and cultural importance of the shrines.

In noting the context of the above passage, while the depictions of square shapes on the chests of various figures in Insular religious art—from stonework with St Vigeans No. 7 to tenth-century metalwork such as an angel mount discovered in Oppadal, Norway [Figure 172]—the physical act of wearing Insular house-shaped shrines over the chest, either in satchels or on their own, may have been connected to the exegesis surrounding the reception of spiritual truths through the heart of the faithful.<sup>784</sup> While Insular house-shaped shrines are no longer hung, worn, or taken on missionary journeys, their portability, their form, and even how the human body may have interacted with them all speak to the religious nature of these objects as active tools in ministering to the faithful and in the spread of Christianity across Europe in the early medieval period.

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<sup>784</sup> *The Work of Angels*, Cat. 134.



## Conclusion

Over the course of this thesis, I have argued for a multifunctional interpretation of Insular house-shaped shrines as portable caskets that likely contained a variety of sacral objects. Chapter one examined the Old Irish and Latin terminology surrounding sacral containers and cross-referenced these to extant inscriptions. The term *chrismal*, which has increasingly been used by modern scholars to denote Insular house-shaped shrines as Eucharistic containers, was shown to instead encompass the containment of chrism oil, the Eucharist, and relics; the differentiation of categories for sacral containers appears to become more prevalent after the main constructional phase of Insular house-shaped shrines. Furthermore, the term *capsa* was shown to be an important point of reference for understanding how early medieval sources generally referred to containers for items, sacral or otherwise. Chapter two discussed the known provenances of Insular house-shaped shrines. Notably, shrines discovered in rivers, lakes, and loughs were also located near early medieval church sites, while those that were buried were typically found in Norway as Viking grave goods. Additionally, renewed interest in Insular house-shaped shrines primarily arose within the context of the Celtic Revival, while saints like Columba appeared prominently and perhaps disproportionately within nineteenth-century antiquarian discussions of the shrines; these contexts profoundly influenced later perceptions of the functions of Insular house-shaped shrines.

Chapters three and four examined the construction, materiality, and ornament of Insular house-shaped shrines, both within the group and in comparison, to other Continental and Mediterranean early medieval shrines. Both chapters argued that the

ornament, materials, and aspects of Insular house-shaped shrine construction show a connection to Continental traditions of displaying and containing sacral matter, although translated into Insular aesthetics and constructed differently due to the availability of materials and divergent functions. Moreover, while some constructional similarities are shared throughout the known group of Insular house-shaped shrines, namely securable trapezoidal lids and internal locking mechanisms, there is variation in which shrines have suspension fittings and what forms they take. Overall, chapter three argued that wooden-core Insular house-shaped shrines were likely purpose-built containers and not the enshrined relics of early medieval saints, due to the lack of reworking of some of their wooden cores. In addition, chapter four suggested that while the availability of materials within the period did play a part in the use of tinning, other variables needed to be considered. The materiality of tinned bronze within Irish literature shows that, while not composed of silver or gold, it ranked higher than plain copper alloys. Tinning transformed copper into a much more reflective surface, with the added benefit of protecting the substrate from corrosion. Lastly, the ornamentation displayed within the group of Insular house-shaped shrines did not categorically suggest a single universal function for all the shrines, but the Trinitarian motifs present may have signalled the sacral quality of the shrines and their contents, while also acting as apotropaic symbols protecting their wearers, in a manner similar to how the Trinity is invoked in protective prayers like the *loricae*.

Finally, in Chapter five I discussed how shrine forms similar to Insular house-shaped shrines had been identified within Insular art, all of which further shows that Insular house-shaped shrines and analogous shrine forms were likely understood as

references to local church architecture, although considerably stylised in the case of Insular house-shaped shrines. Due to the Church's relationship with the ancient Temple of Solomon, its current incarnation, its eschatological counterpart, and the slippage between the terms *house*, *church*, *temple*, and their Latin equivalents, I argued that these themes were likely part of the meaning and cultural importance of the shrines, and that Insular 'house'-shaped shrines may best be understood as church-shaped in form.

While scholars have previously attempted to define specific functions for Insular house-shaped shrines, with the current evidence present in this up-to-date study, assigning a singular function to these objects is problematic. Sacral containers are denoted in the contemporary literature by more general terms; the Latin *capsa* or the diminutive *capsella* are used in hagiography, epistles, and histories to denote containers for any form of matter, while inscriptions found on early medieval shrines show that *capsae* could range in size and form. Moreover, Alcuin of York's letter to Ethelhard, archbishop of Canterbury, the *Beth Molaise Daiminse*, *Vita Germani*, and *Vita tripartite sancti Patricii* all record the carrying of a variety of objects in containers hung around the neck, suggesting that these objects and similar containers such as Insular house-shaped shrines may have, as a group, been regarded as containers for any form of sacral matter. Still, connotations of the modern terms used to denote Insular house-shaped shrines profoundly influence our understanding of the objects themselves.

Returning to Aldhelm's riddles, he poetically calls the chrisma a *templum* and *domus*, terms that were employed to denote buildings in general as well as churches and the Temple of Solomon in Jerusalem. Indeed, the expansive denotation

and connotation of *domus* are also seen with how the term *capsa* is used to refer to containers, whether or not they carried sacral matter. Moreover, inscriptions on Continental portable shrines suggests that these *capsae* may not have needed to have functioned mechanically like our modern understanding of boxes—containers that could be opened and closed as needed—but rather, these *capsae* simply needed to contain some form of matter, all while using the general forms of containers that could be opened by lids or sliding panels. Returning to the term *domus*, it too was also used to refer to sepulchres, although in these cases it is important to note that the term appears to be used to refer to the general architectural nature of these tombs. In light of this evidence and especially in regard to Aldhelm’s riddle on the chrismal, referring to Insular house-shaped shrines as house- or church-shaped appears to be an appropriate eighth- to ninth-century manner in which to engage with this class of shrines and related containers, albeit in a poetic manner.

It is important to remember that regarding modern scholarship, we are in effect translators, not only of cultures and motifs, but also of terms; indeed, the translation of the Latin term *ministerium* into Old Irish as *meinistir* is a good example. This type of movement, cultural as well as linguistic, is an ongoing practice. The terms *scrinium*, *scrín*, and *shrine* follow a similar trajectory. The modern iteration of the term *shrine*, as defined by the Oxford English Dictionary, denotes: ‘a box, coffer; a cabinet, chest’; ‘the box, casket, or other repository in which the relics of a saint are preserved. Also, a tomb-like erection of rich workmanship, enclosing the relics of a saint’; ‘an object of veneration’; and ‘that

which encloses, enshrines, or screens, or in which something dwells'.<sup>785</sup>

Etymologically, the term shrine is derived from the Latin *scrinium*, a chest, or case, especially for the keeping of books and papers, whereafter it was brought into Old French, Hiberno-Latin, Old Irish, and Old English as but a few examples.<sup>786</sup> So while definitions of *shrine* mark how the term could denote an architectural space or a container for relics, as discussed in the introduction to this thesis, so too do the modern definitions of the term record that *shrine* may indicate a container or an 'object of veneration', which Insular house-shaped shrines most likely were. The connotations of our modern terms—in this case, English—used to denote Insular house-shaped shrines directly influences our understanding of the objects themselves. Unlike our ninth-century counterparts, we do not refer to these containers simply as boxes (*capsa*), but instead, we seek more explicit terms that allude to specific functions.

Shrines within the group may have exhibited functional variation and specification, as witnessed by the additions and renovations to the Moissac shrine; however, even in this case, the overall use-life of the Moissac shrine and the inscription found on its ridgepole show that it likely contained both relics and elements associated with baptism, such as the Eucharist or chrism oil, across its long use-life. Finally, while the construction of chrismals of Insular monks was not explicitly detailed in penitentials and hagiographies, their small size is alluded to, and considering Alcuin of York's similar *sacculis* and *philacteria*, the overall materials used in the construction of Insular house-shaped shrines—along with the

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<sup>785</sup> Oxford English Dictionary, 'shrine, n.', Oxford University Press, <http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/178891?rskey=0Vq1Lo&result=1&isAdvanced=false>, accessed July 24 2017.

<sup>786</sup> Ibid.



size of the largest shrines such as the Clonard and the Lough Erne (A)—as a wide class of shrines, it appears most likely that Insular house-shaped shrines were not the individual containers of itinerant monks, but rather represent the collective gathering of resources of a community.

I argue that when examining the provenances of the shrines, especially in the instances of shrines found in rivers, lakes, and loughs, local saints offer further possible points of contact for Insular house-shaped shrines. Indeed, the Monymusk shrine's provenance does not reach beyond the modern period, and local saint cults at Monymusk incorporate a variety of figures, including the nearby named Eglismenythok or the Church of Nechtan. Regarding the overall provenances of the shrines found in France and Germany, there do appear to be some possible connections to Irish or Anglo-Saxon saints or kings, but the lack of known histories prevent further insights at present. Finally, the shrines found in Italy do appear connected with the presence of cults to St Columbanus; Bobbio is the most explicit, being the final monastery of St Columbanus. Near Monte Amiata, Abbadia di San Salvatore's link to St Columbanus appears only in the list of dedicatory saints, and Bologna is the least connected, as its known history does not link it to a specific church, although there were early medieval connections between St Columbanus and Bologna via Peter I, the bishop of Bologna.

While the contents of Insular house-shaped shrines should not at this point be exclusively or universally defined by a single type of sacral matter for all shrines, what can be determined is that these boxes functioned as meaning-making devices for both their contemporary audiences and modern viewers. As is evident in the construction of Insular house-shaped shrines, their depiction in paintings and

sculpture, and Aldhelm's poem on the chrismal, the form of Insular house-shaped shrines was reminiscent of churches, which connected them to wider understandings of the spiritual mission of the earthly Church, while also mirroring more local, Insular conceptualisations of sacred containers and spaces. Similarly, the application of multivalent symbols on the shrines, primarily through the placement of decorative glass and gemstone settings, alluded to the primacy of the Trinity within Insular prayer and hagiography.

There are further areas to explore in regard to both Insular house-shaped shrines and wider types of Insular sacral containers. Namely, the early display of Insular artefacts to antiquarian societies and early museums, inclusive of Insular house-shaped shrines, warrants further enquiry especially in light of the Celtic Revival. Specifically, while the letters of Lord Emly in the National Archives in Dublin did not uncover the Emly shrine's origin, there exist other archives containing Lord Emly's letters, which may offer further opportunities to uncover more on William Monsell's antiquarian dealings. Further research around the Norman influence on Insular house-shaped shrines is also possible; similarly, if Insular house-shaped shrines are allusions to eighth- to tenth-century architecture, could one reason they eventually fell out of use be the shift in popular ecclesiastical architecture? Finally, while fragments of Insular shrines are sporadically found by metal detectorists, more research is still possible by engaging with Continental church treasuries, especially those with Insular connections, from which a database or catalogue could be formed, thus providing further opportunities to engage with early medieval portable shrines beyond those already attested to in the academic literature.

As Insular house-shaped shrines were discontinued from use, lost, abandoned, rediscovered, and recontextualized, modern caretakers and audiences of these medieval objects also engaged in them in ways that spoke to both an antiquarian understanding of the past as well as modern conceptualisations of the present. Insular house-shaped shrines represented for some early antiquarians aspects of a Celtic ethos and functioned as gateways into both a historic and mythic past. That is not to say that scholars such as Anderson were engaging in mythopoeics and not scholarship, but rather their interest in tying shrines to larger moments within Scottish history, rather than exploring more local connections, speaks to a particular understanding of Insular house-shaped shrines and what makes artefacts culturally significant.

Indeed, so prevalent is the mythologizing of the shrines that they appear in popular media as touchstones for both Norse and Celtic pasts. In the DruidCraft Tarot deck, a set of illustrated cards used in divination, a reimagined Monymusk shrine is presented as a large chest decorated with four pentacles and an external lock [Figure 173]. Similarly, the back of the Ranvaik shrine is faithfully depicted in a painting by Giacinto Gaudenzi illustrating the legendary Conchobar mac Nessa, the king of Ulster in the Ulster Cycle, whose mythological life predates Insular house-shaped shrines by centuries [Figure 174]. Fortunately, the dialogue is shifting around Insular house-shaped shrines, as seen by a small publication by the Scottish Archaeological Research Framework (ScARF) entitled *Ag Innse Sgeulachd Na H-Alba/Telling Scotland's Story*, which is presented in the style of a graphic novel in Gaelic and English as a way of disseminating the 'latest cutting-edge archaeological research' to wider audiences. The Monymusk shrine is introduced under the header

‘That Obscure Object of Desire’ and is described as ‘one of the most important artefacts in the history of the Scottish Nation’.<sup>787</sup> Rather than focusing on the shrine’s legendary history, James Crawford instead describes the current academic hesitation to ascribe the shrine the status of the *Breccbennach*, while photographs of the shrine are shown with illustrations of a bald man, whose body and clothing is obscured by smoke or mist, holding the opened shrine [Figure 175]. It is important to note that this depiction of a male figure opening the shrine may hint at other assumptions—that the shrines were owned, used, and held exclusively by men. While the evidence from penitentials suggests that these types of containers were likely kept and used primarily by men—and exclusively so in a Eucharistic context—it is important to note that sacral matter and their containers were not owned or used solely by men, as seen with the *Vita sancti Columbae* discussed in chapter one. Indeed, this practice is further attested to in Bede’s *Historia ecclesiastica*, when the abbess Æthelhild begs Queen Osthryth for some of St Oswald’s relic soil, which she wraps in cloth and places in a small container, ‘At illa petiit sibi portionem pulveris salutiferi dari, et accipiens illigatum panno condidit in capsella et rediit’.<sup>788</sup>

While the shrine’s *gravitas* is depicted in highly mystical terms, Crawford instead uses this to propel scholarly enquiry, ‘Objects like the Monymusk Reliquary have a lot left to tell us than we already know. Although it rests behind glass in a museum today, its story is far from over. Lift the silver lid on the wooden box and it may appear empty. But it is not’.<sup>789</sup> So when Insular house-shaped shrines are

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<sup>787</sup> James Crawford, *Telling Scotland's Story* (Edinburgh: ScARF, 2015), 14.

<sup>788</sup> ‘But the abbess desired that some of the dust might be given to her; receiving it, she tied it in a cloth and securing it in a casket, she returned home’, Bede Venerabilis, *Historia ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum*, 1375, Book: 3, Chapter: 11, Page: 68, Line: 12.

<sup>789</sup> Crawford, *Telling Scotland's Story*, 17.

depicted in popular media or when institutions like the National Museum of Denmark respond to questions of returning Viking goods, including the Ranvaik shrine, to their ‘original’ nations, both instances are modern engagements with Insular house-shaped shrines as meaning-making devices that are used by audiences to help construct and inform their ‘Celtic’ identities.<sup>790</sup> Even while behind museum glass, Insular house-shaped shrines continue to function within the modern period, albeit in new ways.

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<sup>790</sup> Maj Bach Madsen, 'Should We Keep the Vikings' Stolen Goods?', *ScienceNordic*, November 7 2012.

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**Holding Heaven in Their Hands:  
An Examination of the Functions, Materials, and  
Ornament of Insular House-shaped Shrines  
Vol. 2**

**Samuel Gerace III**

**D. Phil**

**The University of Edinburgh**

**2017**



## **Declaration**

"I hereby declare that I am the sole author of this thesis; that the following thesis is entirely my own work; and that no part of this thesis has been submitted for another degree or qualification".

Signed

*Samuel Thomas Geraco III*

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## Appendix I: Figures



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**Figure 2:** £20 Clydesdale Bank note from the Famous Scots Series. The Monymusk shrine appears in the bottom left. 2009. Cotton and security features, 8.0 x 14.9 cm. From: The Committee of Scottish Bankers, <http://www.scotbanks.org.uk/banknotes/clydesdale-bank/famous-scots-series/20-famous-scots.html>, accessed April 16 2017.



**Figure 3.A:** Clonard shrine. 7<sup>th</sup>–10<sup>th</sup> century. Tinned copper-alloy panels and blue glass, 7.3 x 19.2 x 8.4 cm. The National Museum of Ireland, Dublin. From: St Finians N. S. Clonard, <http://homepage.eircom.net/~clonardns/shrine.htm>, accessed April 16 2017.



**Figure 3.B:** Clonard shrine, suspension strap. Photograph: Samuel Gerace III. © The National Museum of Ireland.





**Figure 3.C:** Clonard shrine, front plate with decorative mount. Photograph: Samuel Gerace III. © The National Museum of Ireland.



**Figure 3.D:** Clonard shrine, side panel. Photograph: Samuel Gerace III. © The National Museum of Ireland.



**Figure 4.A:** Shannon shrine. 7<sup>th</sup>–10<sup>th</sup> century. Silver panels, copper alloy, and gilding, 9.2 x 11.0 x 5.5 cm. The National Museum of Ireland, Dublin. © The National Museum of Ireland.



**Figure 4.B:** Shannon shrine, back of the lid. Photograph: Samuel Gerace III. © The National Museum of Ireland.





**Figure 4.C:** Shannon shrine, back of the box. Photograph: Samuel Gerace III. © The National Museum of Ireland.



**Figure 4.D:** Shannon shrine, left side panel. Photograph: Samuel Gerace III. © The National Museum of Ireland.



**Figure 4.E:** Shannon shrine, right side panel. Photograph: Samuel Gerace III. © The National Museum of Ireland.



**Figure 4.F:** Shannon shrine, base. Photograph: Samuel Gerace III. © The National Museum of Ireland.



**Figure 4.G:** Shannon shrine, box interior. Photograph: Samuel Gerace III. © The National Museum of Ireland.



**Figure 4.H:** Shannon shrine, lid interior. Photograph: Samuel Gerace III. © The National Museum of Ireland.





**Figure 4.I:** Shannon shrine, view of the folded box and the silver panel on the face of the shrine. Photograph: Samuel Gerace III. © The National Museum of Ireland.



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**Figure 5.B:** Lough Erne shrine (A), back. Photograph: Samuel Gerace III. © The National Museum of Ireland.



**Figure 5.C:** Lough Erne shrine (A), left side panel. Photograph: Samuel Gerace III. © The National Museum of Ireland.



**Figure 5.D:** Lough Erne shrine (A), right side panel. Photograph: Samuel Gerace III. © The National Museum of Ireland.



**Figure 5.E:** Lough Erne shrine (A), base. Photograph: Samuel Gerace III. © The National Museum of Ireland.





**Figure 5.F:** Lough Erne shrine (A), box interior. Photograph: Samuel Gerace III.  
© The National Museum of Ireland.



**Figure 5.G:** Lough Erne shrine (A), lid interior. Photograph: Samuel Gerace III.  
© The National Museum of Ireland.



**Figure 5.H:** Lough Erne shrine (A), overhead view of the ridgepole and front of the shrine. Photograph: Samuel Gerace III. © The National Museum of Ireland.



**Figure 6.A:** Lough Erne shrine (B). 7<sup>th</sup>–10<sup>th</sup> century. Tinned copper-alloy panels, 6.8 x 10.6 x 3.2 cm. The National Museum of Ireland, Dublin. Photograph: Samuel Gerace III. © The National Museum of Ireland.



**Figure 6.B:** Lough Erne shrine (B), back. Photograph: Samuel Gerace III. © The National Museum of Ireland.

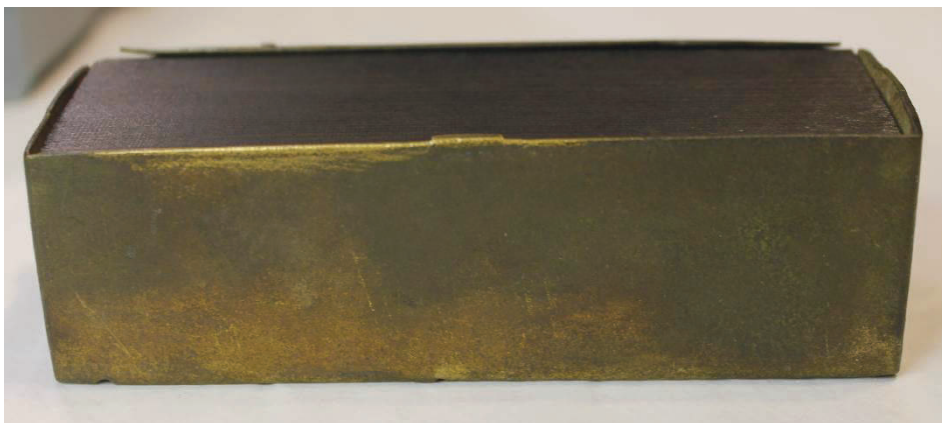


**Figure 6.C:** Lough Erne shrine (B), left side. Photograph: Samuel Gerace III. © The National Museum of Ireland.





**Figure 6.D:** Lough Erne shrine (B), right side. Photograph: Samuel Gerace III. © The National Museum of Ireland.



**Figure 6.E:** Lough Erne shrine (B), base. Photograph: Samuel Gerace III. © The National Museum of Ireland.



**Figure 7.A:** Ridgepole with face. 7<sup>th</sup>–11<sup>th</sup> century. Copper alloy, 11.74 cm length. The National Museum of Ireland, Dublin. Photograph: Samuel Gerace III. © The National Museum of Ireland.



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**Figure 9.A:** Emly shrine (post-restoration). 7<sup>th</sup>–10<sup>th</sup> century. Tinned lead, copper alloy, enamel, and wood, 9.2 x 10.5 x 4.1 cm. The Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. From: The Museum of Fine Arts, <http://www.mfa.org/collections/object/reliquary-casket-emly-shrine-52287>, accessed April 26 2017.



**Figure 9.B:** Emly shrine, interior view (post-restoration). From: The Museum of Fine Arts, <http://www.mfa.org/collections/object/reliquary-casket-emly-shrine-52287>, accessed April 26 2017.



**Figure 9.C:** Emly shrine, interior view (pre-restoration): lid above, box below. From: The Museum of Fine Arts, <http://www.mfa.org/collections/object/reliquary-casket-emly-shrine-52287>, accessed April 26 2017.



**Figure 10.A:** Clonmore shrine. 7<sup>th</sup>–10<sup>th</sup> century. Tinned copper-alloy panels, blue glass, and enamel (?), 8.0 x 8.2 x 2.7 cm. The Ulster Museum, Belfast. From:

Cormac Bourke, 'Finding the Clonmore Shrine', in *Lost and Found II: Rediscovering Ireland's Past*, ed. Joe Fenwick (Dublin: Wordwell, 2009), 16.



**Figure 10.B:** Clonmore shrine, back. From: Cormac Bourke, 'Finding the Clonmore Shrine', in *Lost and Found II: Rediscovering Ireland's Past*, ed. Joe Fenwick (Dublin: Wordwell, 2009), 16.



**Figure 10.C:** Clonmore shrine, left side panel. Photograph: Samuel Gerace III. © The Ulster Museum.





**Figure 10.D:** Clonmore shrine, right side panel. Photograph: Samuel Gerace III. © The Ulster Museum.



**Figure 10.E:** Clonmore shrine, base panel. Photograph: Samuel Gerace III. © The Ulster Museum.



**Figure 10.F:** Clonmore shrine, portion of locking pin and suspension hinge. Photograph: Samuel Gerace III. © The Ulster Museum.



**Figure 10.G:** Clonmore shrine, interior portion of locking pin. Photograph: Samuel Gerace III. © The Ulster Museum.



**Figure 10.H:** Clonmore shrine, associated mount (suspension strap fragment?). Photograph: Samuel Gerace III. © The Ulster Museum.



**Figure 10.I:** Clonmore shrine, associated fragments (possibly from another artefact?). From: Cormac Bourke, 'Finding the Clonmore Shrine', in *Lost and Found II: Rediscovering Ireland's Past*, ed. Joe Fenwick (Dublin: Wordwell, 2009), 18.



**Figure 10.J:** Clonmore shrine, back hinges. Photograph: Samuel Gerace III. © The Ulster Museum.



**Figure 11.A:** Ridgepole fragment. 7<sup>th</sup>–10<sup>th</sup> century. Copper alloy, gilding, and niello (?), 5.7 cm length. The Ulster Museum, Belfast. Photograph: Samuel Gerace III. © The Ulster Museum.



**Figure 11.B:** Ridgepole fragment, above view. Photograph: Samuel Gerace III. © The Ulster Museum.



**Figure 12:** Ridgepole fragment, terminal. 7<sup>th</sup>–10<sup>th</sup> century. Copper alloy and enamel, 4.59 cm length. The Ulster Museum, Belfast. Photograph: Samuel Gerace III. © The Ulster Museum.



**Figure 13.A:** Ridgepole with stylised terminals. 7<sup>th</sup>–10<sup>th</sup> century. Copper-alloy and enamel, 10.5 cm length. The Ulster Museum, Belfast. Photograph: Samuel Gerace III. © The Ulster Museum.





**Figure 13.B:** Ridgepole with stylised terminals, back. Photograph: Samuel Gerace III. © The Ulster Museum.

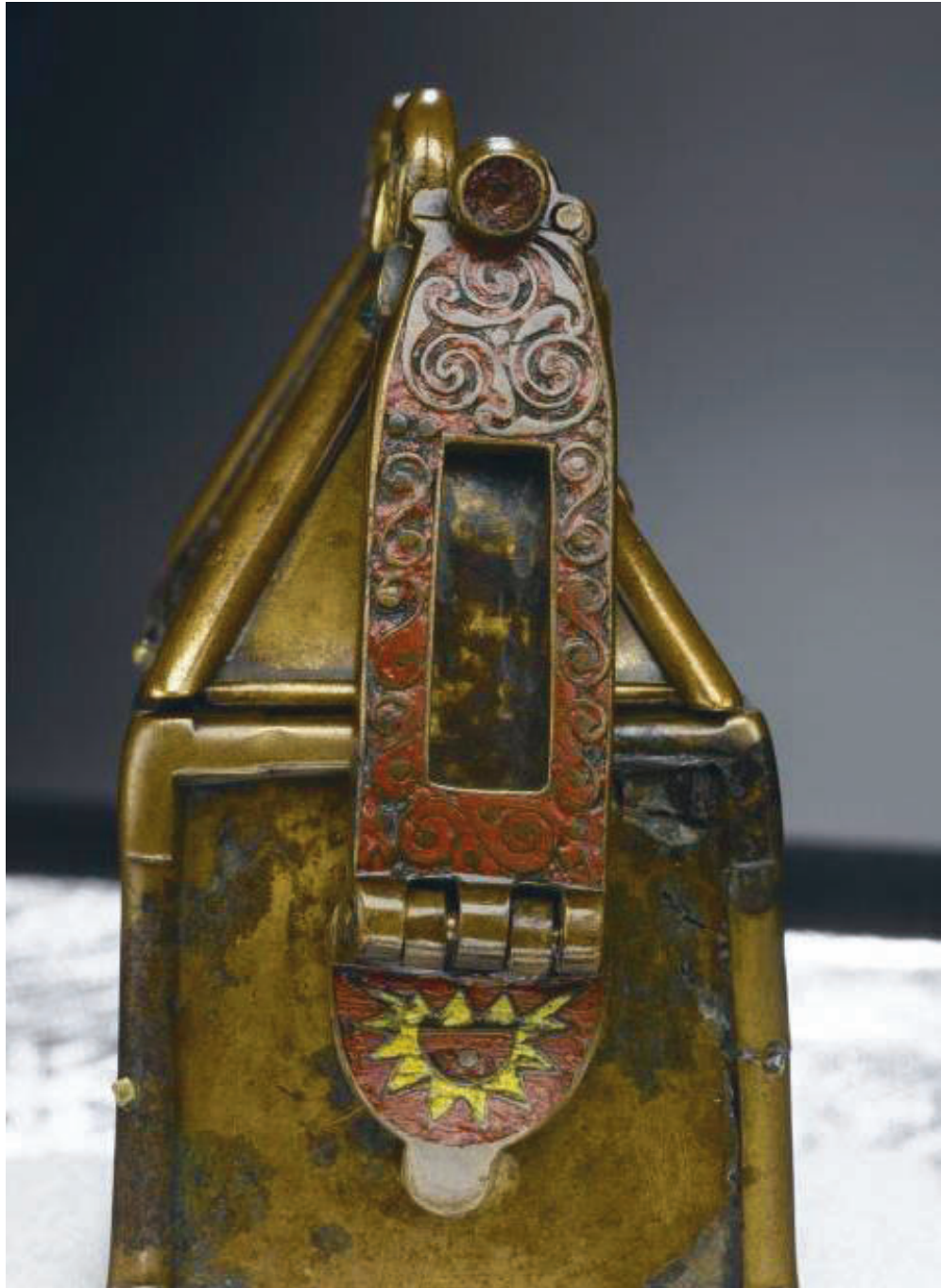


**Figure 14.A:** Monymusk shrine. 7<sup>th</sup>–10<sup>th</sup> century. Copper alloy, silver, blue glass, enamel, and wood, 8.4 x 11.0 x 5.4 cm. The National Museum of Scotland, Edinburgh. From: The National Museum of Scotland, <http://www.nms.ac.uk/national-museum-of-scotland/>, accessed April 27 2017.





**Figure 14.B:** Monymusk shrine, back showing the left side. From: The National Museum of Scotland, <http://www.nms.ac.uk/national-museum-of-scotland/>, accessed April 27 2017.

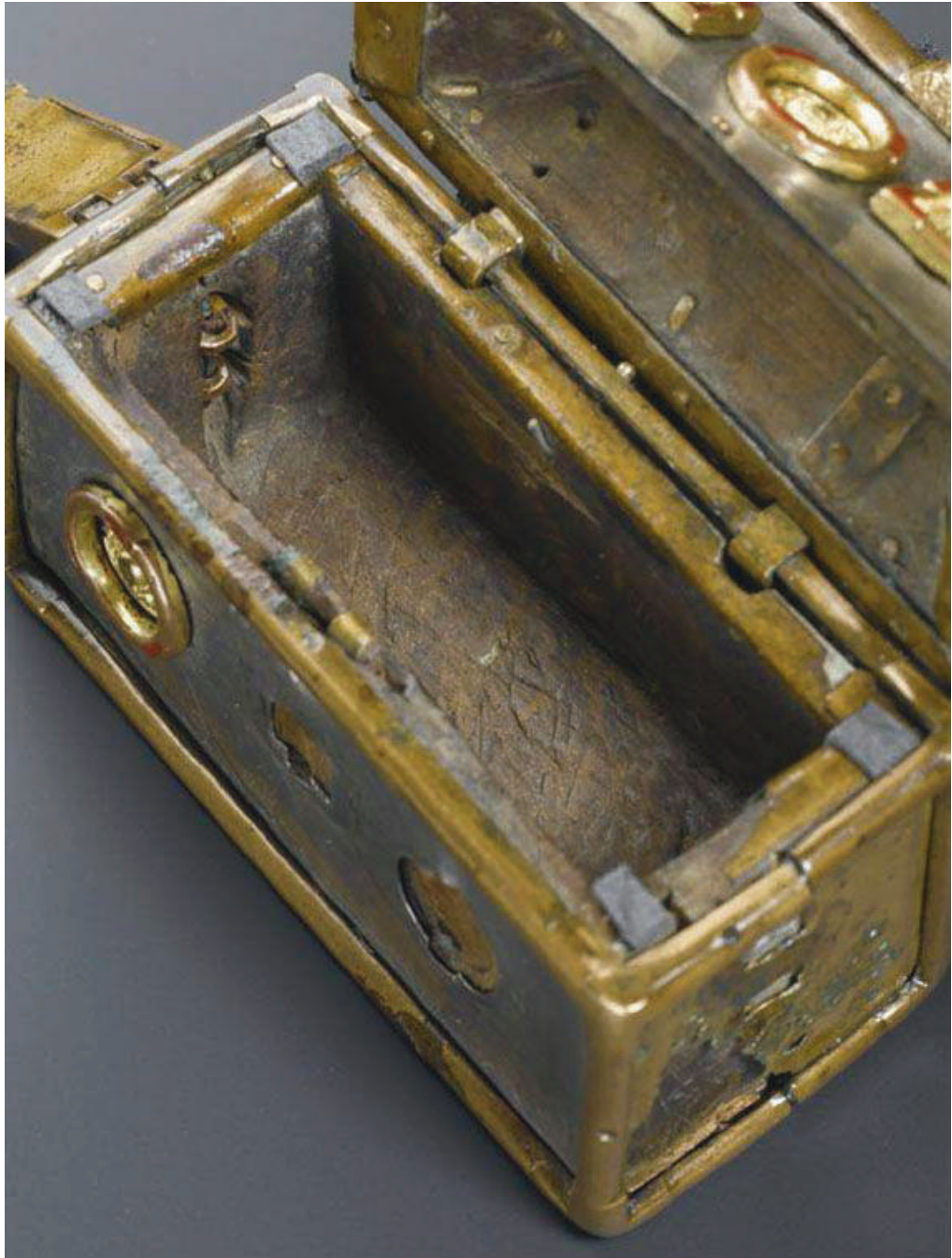


**Figure 14.C:** Monymusk shrine, left suspension strap. From: The National Museum of Scotland, <http://www.nms.ac.uk/national-museum-of-scotland/>, accessed April 27 2017.



**Figure 14.D:** Monymusk shrine, front showing the right side. From: The National Museum of Scotland, <http://www.nms.ac.uk/national-museum-of-scotland/>, accessed April 27 2017.





**Figure 14.E:** Monymusk shrine, interior showing carved wooden core. From: The National Museum of Scotland, <http://www.nms.ac.uk/national-museum-of-scotland/>, accessed April 27 2017.



FIG. 13. The Monymusk Shrine. Drawing of decoration on front. After D. M.

**Figure 14.F:** Detail of the Monymusk shrine's zoomorphic interlace, D. M. Wilson (illustrator). From: Martin Blindheim, 'The Ranuaik Reliquary in Copenhagen—A Short Study', in *Proceedings of the Tenth Viking Congress: Larkollen, Norway, 1985*, ed. Knirk. James E. and Charlotte Blindheim (Oslo: Universitetets Oldsaksamling, 1987), 11.



**Figure 15:** Ridgepole with bulbous-headed beast terminals. 7<sup>th</sup>–10<sup>th</sup> century. Copper alloy and gilding, 10.4 cm length. The National Museum of Scotland, Edinburgh. From: The National Museum of Scotland, <http://www.nms.ac.uk/national-museum-of-scotland/>, accessed April 27 2017.





**Figure 16.A:** Melhus shrine. 7<sup>th</sup>–10<sup>th</sup> century. Copper-alloy, enamel, *millefiori*, tinning, and wood, 8.3 x 11.8 x 4.7 cm. Vitenskapsmuseet, Trondheim. Photograph: Samuel Gerace III. © The NTNU University Museum.



**Figure 16.B:** Melhus shrine, back. Photograph: Samuel Gerace III. © The NTNU University Museum.



**Figure 16.C:** Melhus shrine, left side with suspension strap and locking pin.  
Photograph: Samuel Gerace III. © The NTNU University Museum.





**Figure 16.D:** Melhus shrine, right side. Photograph: Samuel Gerace III. © The NTNU University Museum.





**Figure 16.E:** Melhus shrine, base. Photograph: Samuel Gerace III. © The NTNU University Museum.



**Figure 16.F:** Melhus shrine, box interior. Photograph: Samuel Gerace III. © The NTNU University Museum.



**Figure 16.G:** Melhus shrine, lid interior. Photograph: Samuel Gerace III. © The NTNU University Museum.



**Figure 16.H:** Melhus shrine locking pin. Photograph: Samuel Gerace III. © The NTNU University Museum.



**Figure 16.I:** Melhus shrine, ridgepole terminal and rolled tube. Photograph: Samuel Gerace III. © The NTNU University Museum.





**Figure 17.A:** Setnes shrine. 7<sup>th</sup>–10<sup>th</sup> century. Copper-alloy, tinning, enamel, and wood, 8.8 x 11.5 x 5.0 cm. Vitenskapsmuseet, Trondheim. Photograph: Samuel Gerace III. © The NTNU University Museum.



**Figure 17.B:** Setnes shrine, back. Photograph: Samuel Gerace III. © The NTNU University Museum.



**Figure 17.C:** Setnes shrine, left side. Photograph: Samuel Gerace III. © The NTNU University Museum.



**Figure 17.D:** Setnes shrine, right side. Photograph: Samuel Gerace III. © The NTNU University Museum.



**Figure 17.E:** Setnes shrine, base. Photograph: Samuel Gerace III. © The NTNU University Museum.



**Figure 17.F:** Setnes shrine, box interior. Photograph: Samuel Gerace III. © The NTNU University Museum.





**Figure 17.G:** Setnes shrine, lid interior. Photograph: Samuel Gerace III. © The NTNU University Museum.



**Figure 18.A:** Hokksund shrine panel. 7<sup>th</sup>–10<sup>th</sup> century. Copper alloy, *millefiori*, and enamel (?), 2.9 x 2.1 cm. Buskerud fylkeskommune, Drammen. Image provided by Bernt-Egil Tafjord, Buskerud fylkeskommune, personal communication, March 23 2015. © The Museum of Cultural History at the University of Oslo.



**Figure 18.B:** Hokksund shrine suspension strap. Copper alloy, *millefiori*, and enamel (?), 3.6 x 1.2 cm. Buskerud fylkeskommune, Drammen. Image provided by Bernt-Egil Tafjord, Buskerud fylkeskommune, personal communication, March 23 2015. © The Museum of Cultural History at the University of Oslo.



**Figure 19.A:** Ranvaik shrine. 7<sup>th</sup>–10<sup>th</sup> century. Copper alloy, tinning, enamel, and wood, 9.3 x 13.4 x 5.5 cm. Nationalmuseet, Copenhagen. Photograph: Samuel Gerace III. © Nationalmuseet, Copenhagen.





**Figure 19.B:** Ranvaik shrine, back. Photograph: Samuel Gerace III. © Nationalmuseet, Copenhagen.





**Figure 19.C:** Ranvaik shrine, left side. Photograph: Samuel Gerace III. © Nationalmuseet, Copenhagen.



**Figure 19.D:** Ranvaik shrine, right side. Photograph: Samuel Gerace III. © Nationalmuseet, Copenhagen.



**Figure 19.E:** Ranvaik shrine, base. Photograph: Samuel Gerace III. © Nationalmuseet, Copenhagen.



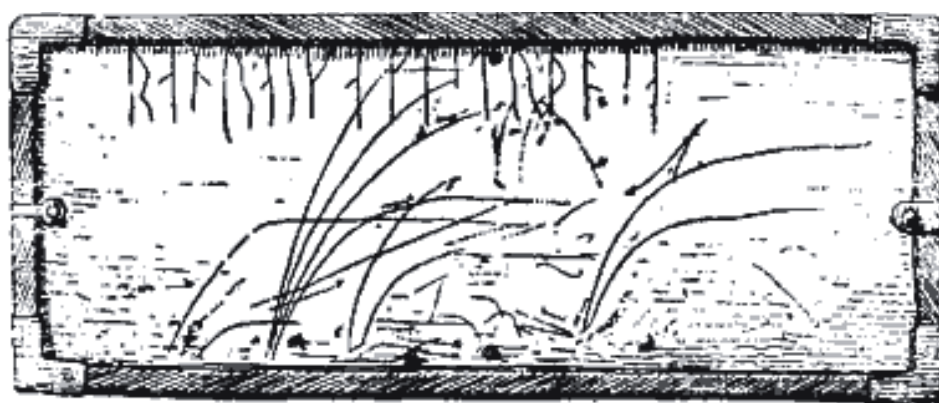
**Figure 19.F:** Ranvaik shrine, box interior. Photograph: Samuel Gerace III. © Nationalmuseet, Copenhagen.



**Figure 19.G:** Ranvaik shrine, lid interior. Photograph: Samuel Gerace III. © Nationalmuseet, Copenhagen.

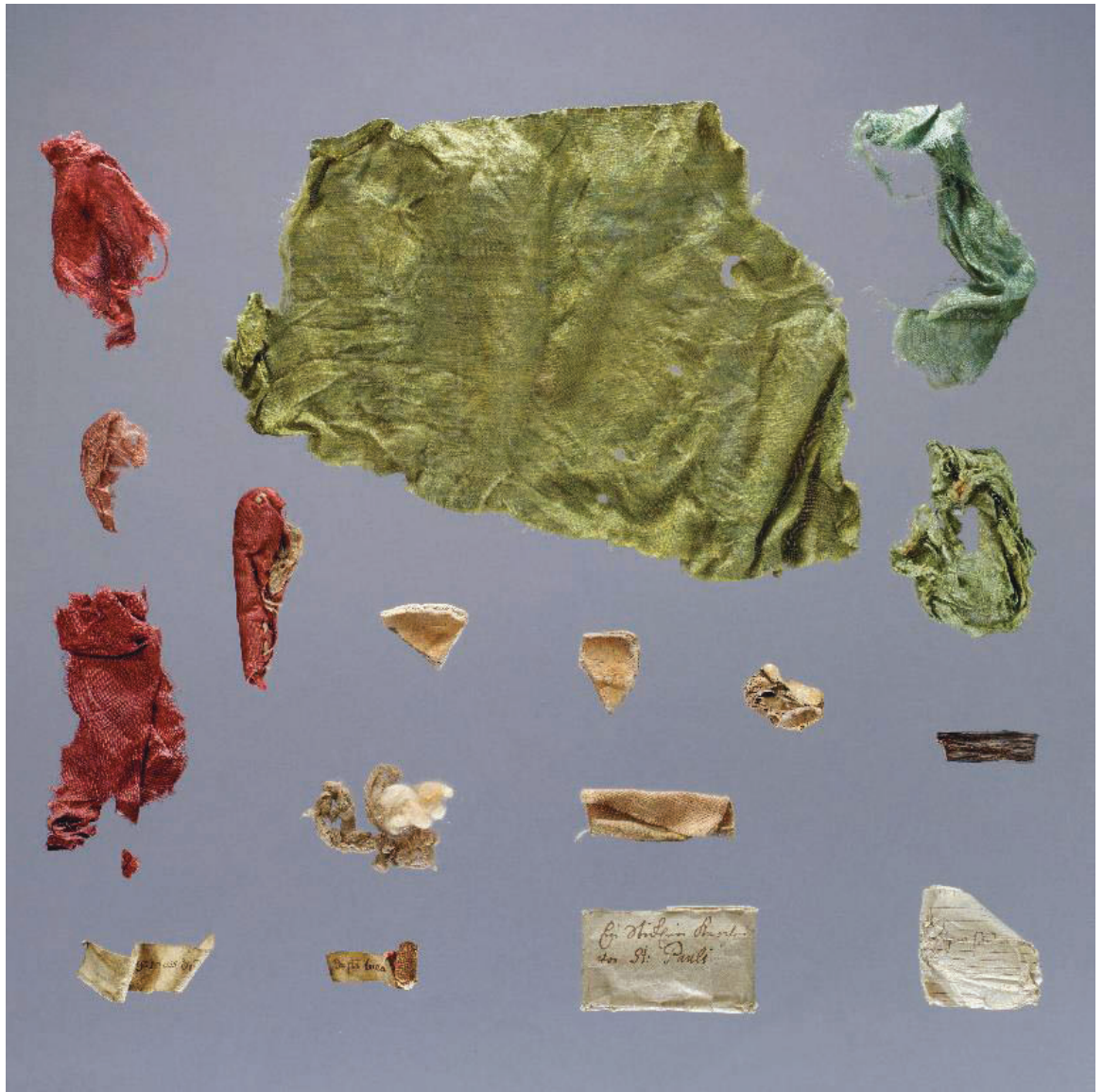


**Figure 19.H:** Ranvaik shrine, above view showing ridgepole and back of the shrine. Photograph: Samuel Gerace III. © Nationalmuseet, Copenhagen.



**Figure 19.I:** Illustration of the inscription on the Ranvaik shrine. From: A Manx Note Book, <http://www.isle-of-man.com/manxnotebook/iomnhas/v01p585.htm>, accessed June 16 2017.

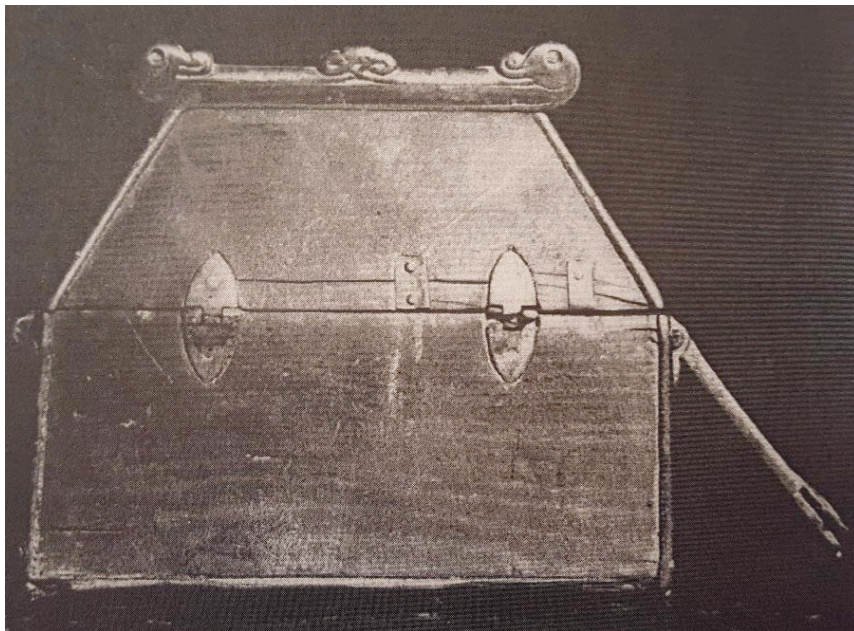




**Figure 19.J:** Relics housed inside the Ranvaik shrine. 13<sup>th</sup>–15<sup>th</sup> century. Wood, bone, paper, and cloth. Nationalmuseet, Copenhagen. Image provided by Vivian Etting, Nationalmuseet, personal communication, November 18 2013. © Nationalmuseet, Copenhagen.



**Figure 20.A:** Amiata shrine. 7<sup>th</sup>–10<sup>th</sup> century. Tinned-lead, copper alloy, glass, garnets, and gilding, 7.5 x 12.1 x 4.87 cm. Museo dell'Abbazia, Comune di Abbazia San Salvatore. From: *Kunst und Kultur der Karolingerzeit*, ed. Christoph Stiegemann and Matthias Wemhoff (Mainz: Philipp von Zabern, 1999), 457.



**Figure 20.B:** Amiata shrine, back. From: Fabrizio Mancinelli, 'Relique e Reliquiari ad Abbazia S. Salvatore', *Rendiconti della Pontificia Accademia Romana di Archeologia* 46 (1975): 252.





**Figure 21:** 'Pictich beast' on Meigle No. 5, side view. 9<sup>th</sup> century. Sandstone, 72 cm height. Meigle Sculptured Stone Museum, Meigle. From: Flickr, <https://www.flickr.com/photos/kylemunro1/4831788689/in/pool-827577@N22/>, accessed April 27 2017.



**Figure 22.A:** Bobbio shrine. 7<sup>th</sup>–10<sup>th</sup> century. Tinned copper-alloy panels, rock crystal, and enamel (?), 7.0 x 8.7 x 3.0 cm. Museo dell'abbazia di San Colombano, Bobbio. From: *Credo: Christianisierung Europas im Mittelalter*, ed. Christoph Stiegemann, Martin Kroker and Wolfgang Walter, 2 vols., vol. 2 (Petersberg: Ihmof, 2013), 221.



**Figure 22.B:** Bobbio shrine, right side. From: Columbanus' Life and Legacy, <https://columbanus2015.wordpress.com/2013/06/28/examination-of-the-bobbio-reliquarychrismal/>, accessed May 22 2017.



**Figure 22.C:** Bobbio shrine, detail of wear on front. From: Columbanus' Life and Legacy, <https://columbanus2015.wordpress.com/2013/06/28/examination-of-the-bobbio-reliquarychrismal/>, accessed May 22 2017.



**Figure 22.D:** Bobbio shrine, detail of ornament with possible remnants of red enamel, which has degraded to a greenish colour. From: Columbanus' Life and Legacy, <https://columbanus2015.wordpress.com/2013/06/28/examination-of-the-bobbio-reliquarychrismal/>, accessed May 22 2017.

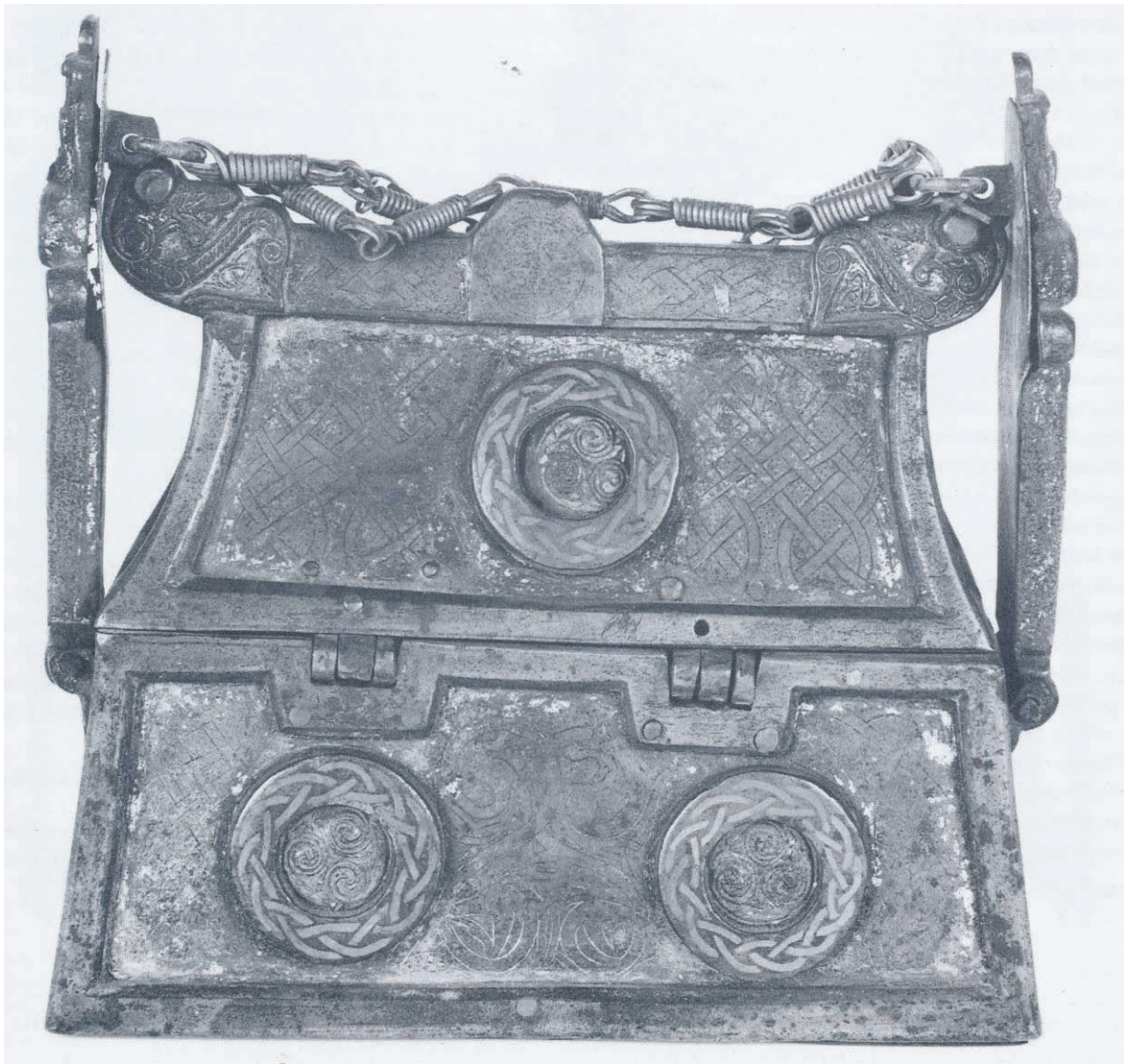




**Figure 23.A:** Bologna shrine. 7<sup>th</sup>–10<sup>th</sup> century. Copper alloy, gilding, tinning, enamel, and glass, 10.0 x 12.0 x 4.1 cm. Museo Civico Medievale, Bologna. Image provided by Irene Faranda, Museo Civico Medievale, personal communication, September 11 2016. © Archivio Fotografico Musei Civici d'Arte Antica.



**Figure 23.B:** Bologna shrine, back. Image provided by Irene Faranda, Museo Civico Medievale, personal communication, September 11 2016. © Archivio Fotografico Musei Civici d'Arte Antica.



**Figure 23.C:** Bologna shrine back, black and white detail. From: Martin Blindheim, 'A House-Shaped Irish-Scots Reliquary in Bologna', *Acta Archaeologica* 55 (1984): 50.





**Figure 23.D:** Bologna shrine, left side. Image provided by Irene Faranda, Museo Civico Medievale, personal communication, September 11 2016. © Archivio Fotografico Musei Civici d'Arte Antica.



**Figure 23.E:** Bologna shrine, right side. Image provided by Irene Faranda, Museo Civico Medievale, personal communication, September 11 2016. © Archivio Fotografico Musei Civici d'Arte Antica.



**Figure 23.F:** Bologna shrine, base. Image provided by Irene Faranda, Museo Civico Medievale, personal communication, September 11 2016. © Archivio Fotografico Musei Civici d'Arte Antica.

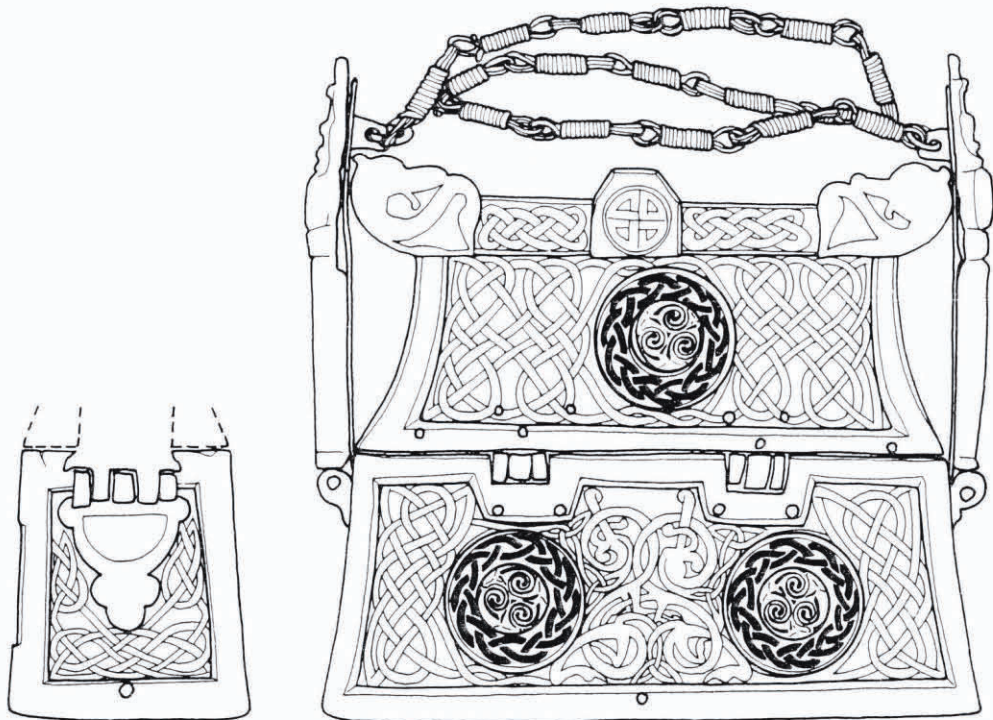


Fig. 10. The Bologna Shrine. Drawing of decoration on back and short sides. By Anna Maria Monaco.

**Figure 23.G:** Drawing detailing the zoomorphic interlace on the Bologna shrine. Anna Maria Monaco (illustrator). From: Martin Blindheim, 'The Ranuaik Reliquary in Copenhagen—A Short Study', in *Proceedings of the Tenth Viking Congress: Larkollen, Norway, 1985*, ed. Knirk. James E. and Charlotte Blindheim, (Oslo: Universitetets Oldsaksamling, 1987), 209.





**Figure 24:** Pictish cross-slab, Nigg. 8<sup>th</sup> century. Sandstone, 2.05 x .87 x .16 m. Old Church, Nigg. From: Andy James, <https://www.bluedrift.com/2009/05/scotland-2009/pictish-cross-at-nigg-old-church/>, accessed April 27 2017.



**Figure 25.A:** Moissac shrine. 7<sup>th</sup>–10<sup>th</sup> century. Copper-alloy panels, iron, silver, gilding, and wood, 15.6 x 13.0 x 6.0 cm. Private Collection, London. From: Leslie Webster, 'A Recently Discovered Anglo-Carolingian Chrismatory', in *Matter of Faith: An Interdisciplinary Study of Relics and Relic Veneration in the Medieval Period*, ed. James Robinson, Lloyd de Beer, and Anna Harnden, (London: British Museum, 2014), 66.





**Figure 25.B:** Moissac shrine, back. From: Treasures of Heaven, <http://www.learn.columbia.edu/treasuresofheaven/relics/Chrismatory.php>, accessed April 27 2017.



**Figure 25.C:** Moissac shrine, left gable. From: Leslie Webster, 'A Recently Discovered Anglo-Carolingian Chrismatory', in *Matter of Faith: An Interdisciplinary Study of Relics and Relic Veneration in the Medieval Period*, ed. James Robinson, Lloyd de Beer, and Anna Harnden, (London: British Museum, 2014), 67.



**Figure 25.D:** Moissac shrine, left box panel. From: Leslie Webster, 'A Recently Discovered Anglo-Carolingian Chrismatory', in *Matter of Faith: An Interdisciplinary Study of Relics and Relic Veneration in the Medieval Period*, ed. James Robinson, Lloyd de Beer, and Anna Harnden, (London: British Museum, 2014), 67.



**Figure 25.E:** Moissac shrine, right box panel. From: Leslie Webster, 'A Recently Discovered Anglo-Carolingian Chrismatory', in *Matter of Faith: An Interdisciplinary Study of Relics and Relic Veneration in the Medieval Period*, ed. James Robinson, Lloyd de Beer, and Anna Harnden, (London: British Museum, 2014), 69.



**Figure 25.F:** Moissac shrine, base. From: Leslie Webster, 'A Recently Discovered Anglo-Carolingian Chrismatory', in *Matter of Faith: An Interdisciplinary Study of Relics and Relic Veneration in the Medieval Period*, ed. James Robinson, Lloyd de Beer, and Anna Harnden, (London: British Museum, 2014), 67.



**Figure 25.G:** Moissac shrine, box interior. From: Leslie Webster, 'A Recently Discovered Anglo-Carolingian Chrismatory', in *Matter of Faith: An Interdisciplinary Study of Relics and Relic Veneration in the Medieval Period*, ed. James Robinson, Lloyd de Beer, and Anna Harnden, (London: British Museum, 2014), 68.

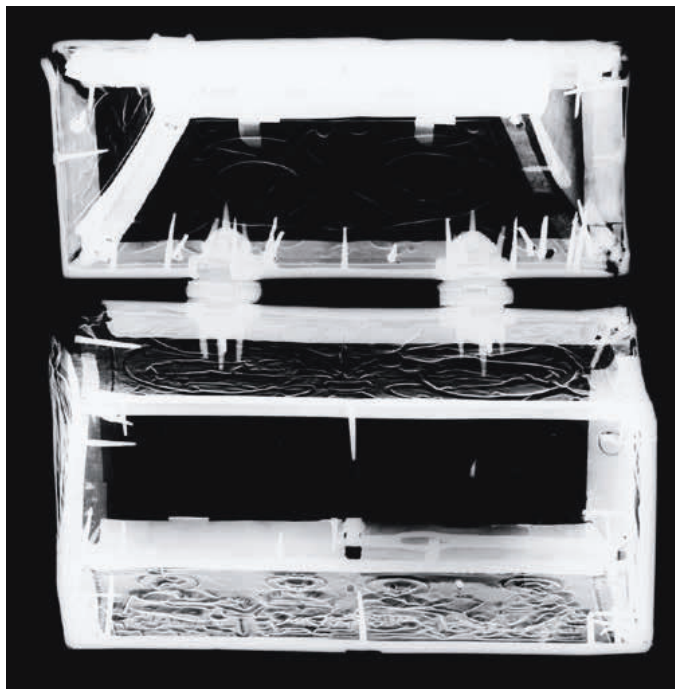


**Figure 25.H:** Moissac shrine, lid interior. From: Leslie Webster, 'A Recently Discovered Anglo-Carolingian Chrismatory', in *Matter of Faith: An Interdisciplinary Study of Relics and Relic Veneration in the Medieval Period*, ed. James Robinson, Lloyd de Beer, and Anna Harnden, (London: British Museum, 2014), 68.





**Figure 25.I:** Moissac shrine, ridgepole inscription. From: Leslie Webster, 'A Recently Discovered Anglo-Carolingian Chrismatory', in *Matter of Faith: An Interdisciplinary Study of Relics and Relic Veneration in the Medieval Period*, ed. James Robinson, Lloyd de Beer, and Anna Harnden, (London: British Museum, 2014), 69.



**Figure 25.J:** Radiograph of Moissac shrine with visible locking mechanism. From: Leslie Webster, 'A Recently Discovered Anglo-Carolingian Chrismatory', in *Matter of Faith: An Interdisciplinary Study of Relics and Relic Veneration in the Medieval Period*, ed. James Robinson, Lloyd de Beer, and Anna Harnden, (London: British Museum, 2014), 67.

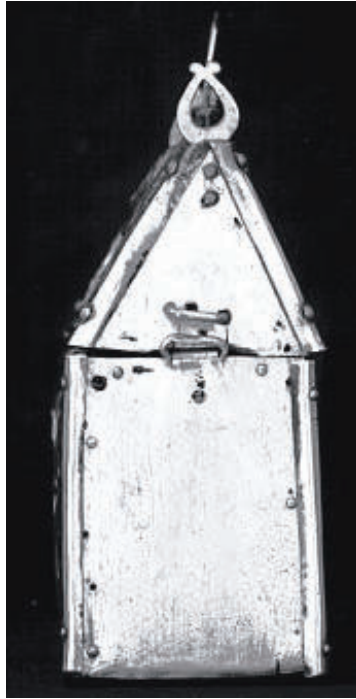


**Figure 26.A:** Mortain shrine. 7<sup>th</sup>–10<sup>th</sup> century. Copper alloy, gilding, and wood, 10.5 x 13.5 x 5.0 cm. La collégiale Saint-Évroult, Mortain. From: Patrick Périn and Laure-Charlotte Feffer, *La Neustrie: les pays au nord de la Loire de Dagobert à Charles le Chauve* (Rouen: Musées et monuments départementaux de Seine-Maritime, 1985), 90.



**Figure 26.B:** Mortain shrine, back. From: Ministère de la Culture et de la Communication, <http://www.culture.gouv.fr>, accessed April 27, 2017.



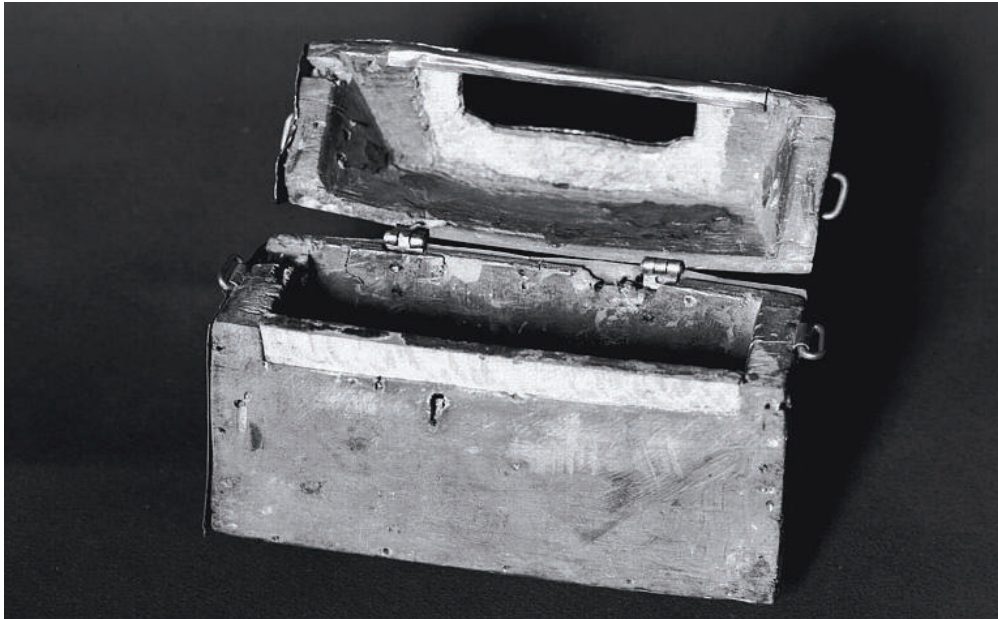


**Figure 26.C:** Mortain shrine, left side. From: Ministère de la Culture et de la Communication, <http://www.culture.gouv.fr>, accessed April 27, 2017.



**Figure 26.D:** Mortain shrine, right side. From: Ministère de la Culture et de la Communication, <http://www.culture.gouv.fr>, accessed April 27, 2017.





**Figure 26.E:** Mortain shrine, interior view during restoration. From: Ministère de la Culture et de la Communication, <http://www.culture.gouv.fr>, accessed April 27, 2017.<http://www.culture.gouv.fr>.

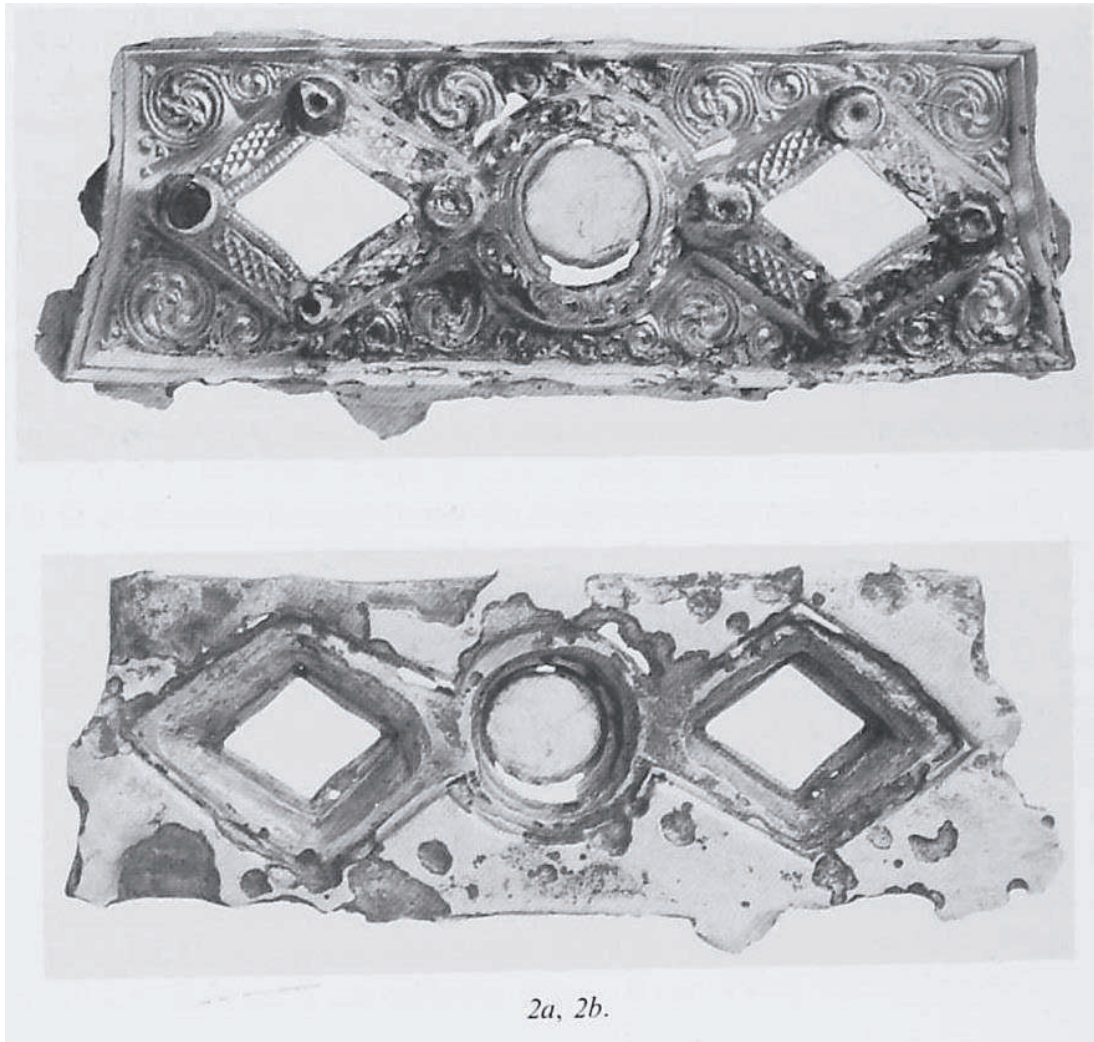


**Figure 26.F:** Mortain Shrine, reverse of the front panel depicting Christ and SS Gabriel and Michael. From: Ministère de la Culture et de la Communication, <http://www.culture.gouv.fr>, accessed April 27, 2017.



**Figure 27:** London shrine. 7<sup>th</sup>–10<sup>th</sup> century. Silver and niello, 12.1 x 5.1 cm (lid), 12.6 x 5.2 cm (box). The British Museum, London. Photograph: Samuel Gerace III © The British Museum.



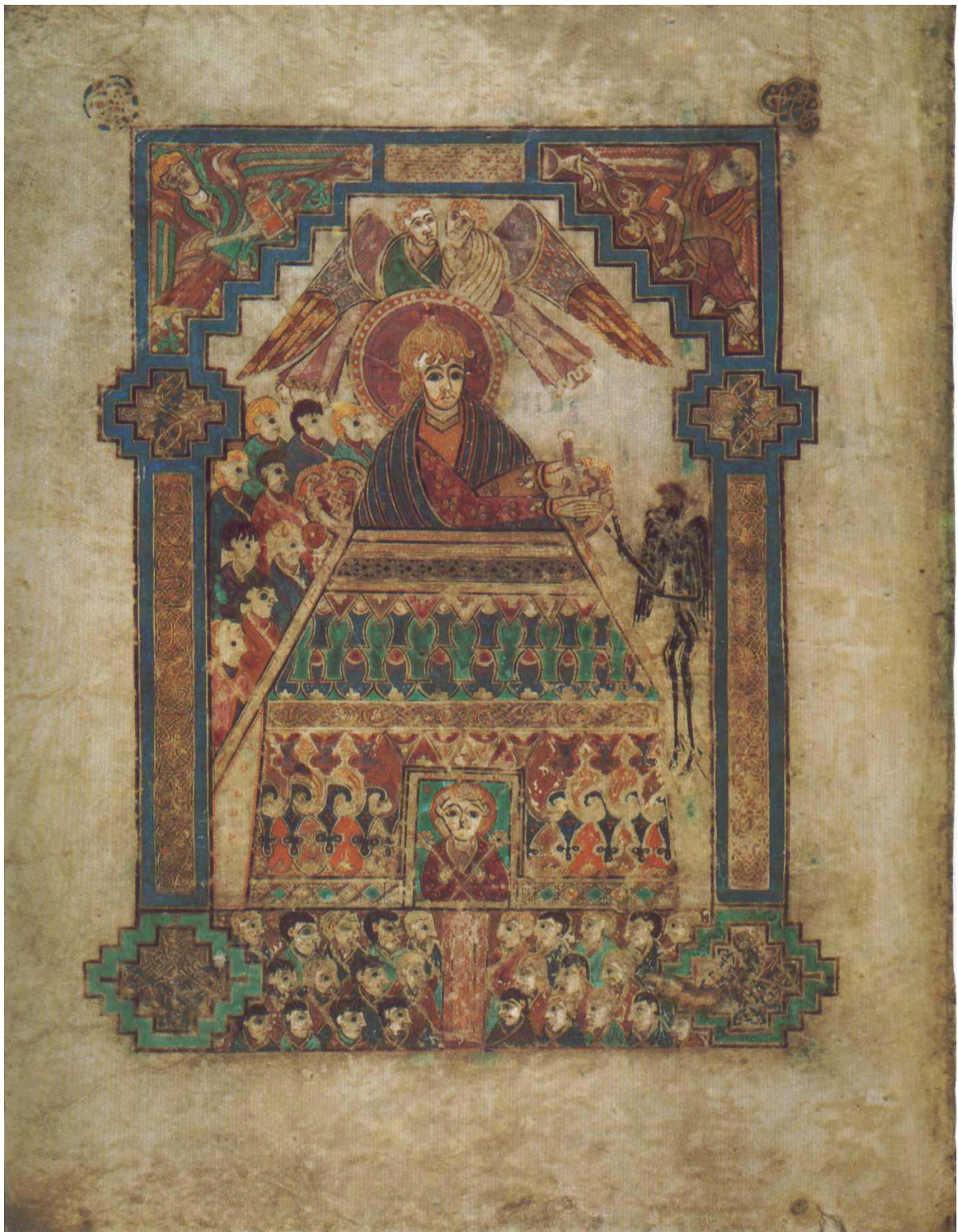


**Figure 28:** Brussels shrine. 7<sup>th</sup>–10<sup>th</sup> century. Copper alloy, gilding, and glass, 3.8 x 10.8 cm. Musée du Cinquantenaire, Musées royaux d'art et d'histoire, Brussels (current location unknown). From: Michael Ryan, 'An Insular Gilt-Bronze Object', *Bulletin des Musées royaux d'Art et d'Histoire* 56 (1985): 60.



**Figure 29:** Breac Maadhóg. 11<sup>th</sup>–12<sup>th</sup> century. Copper alloy and wood, 19.0 x 22.0 x 9.0 cm. The National Museum of Ireland, Dublin. From: The Irish Times, <http://www.irishtimes.com/culture/art-and-design/a-history-of-ireland-in-100-objects-breac-maodh%C3%B3g-shrine-late-11th-century-1.7337>, accessed April 17 2017.





**Figure 30:** Book of Kells, MS 58, fol. 202v, 'Temptation of Christ'. 9<sup>th</sup> century. Vellum and pigment, 33.0 x 25.0 cm. Trinity College Library, Dublin. From: Trinity College Dublin, <http://www.tcd.ie/library/manuscripts/blog/2016/09/the-temptation-page-of-the-book-of-kells/>, accessed April 27, 2017.



**Figure 31.A:** Continental purse-shaped shrine. 7<sup>th</sup>–8<sup>th</sup> century. Glass, copper alloy, gilding, and wood, 12.5 x 13.0 x 6.0 cm. Parish Church of Saint-Bonnet-de-Clermont, Saint-Bonnet-Avalouze. From: Ministère de la Culture et de la Communication, <http://www.culture.gouv.fr>, accessed April 27, 2017.



**Figure 31.B:** Continental purse-shaped shrine, back. From: Ministère de la Culture et de la Communication, <http://www.culture.gouv.fr>, accessed April 27, 2017.





**Figure 31.C:** Continental purse-shaped shrine, left side. From: Ministère de la Culture et de la Communication, <http://www.culture.gouv.fr>, accessed April 27, 2017.



**Figure 31.D:** Continental purse-shaped shrine, right side. From: Ministère de la Culture et de la Communication, <http://www.culture.gouv.fr>, accessed April 27, 2017.



**Figure 31.E:** Continental purse-shaped shrine, base. From: Ministère de la Culture et de la Communication, <http://www.culture.gouv.fr>, accessed April 27, 2017.



**Figure 31.F:** Purse-shaped Shrine, view from above showing the ridgepole. From: Ministère de la Culture et de la Communication, <http://www.culture.gouv.fr>, accessed April 27, 2017.





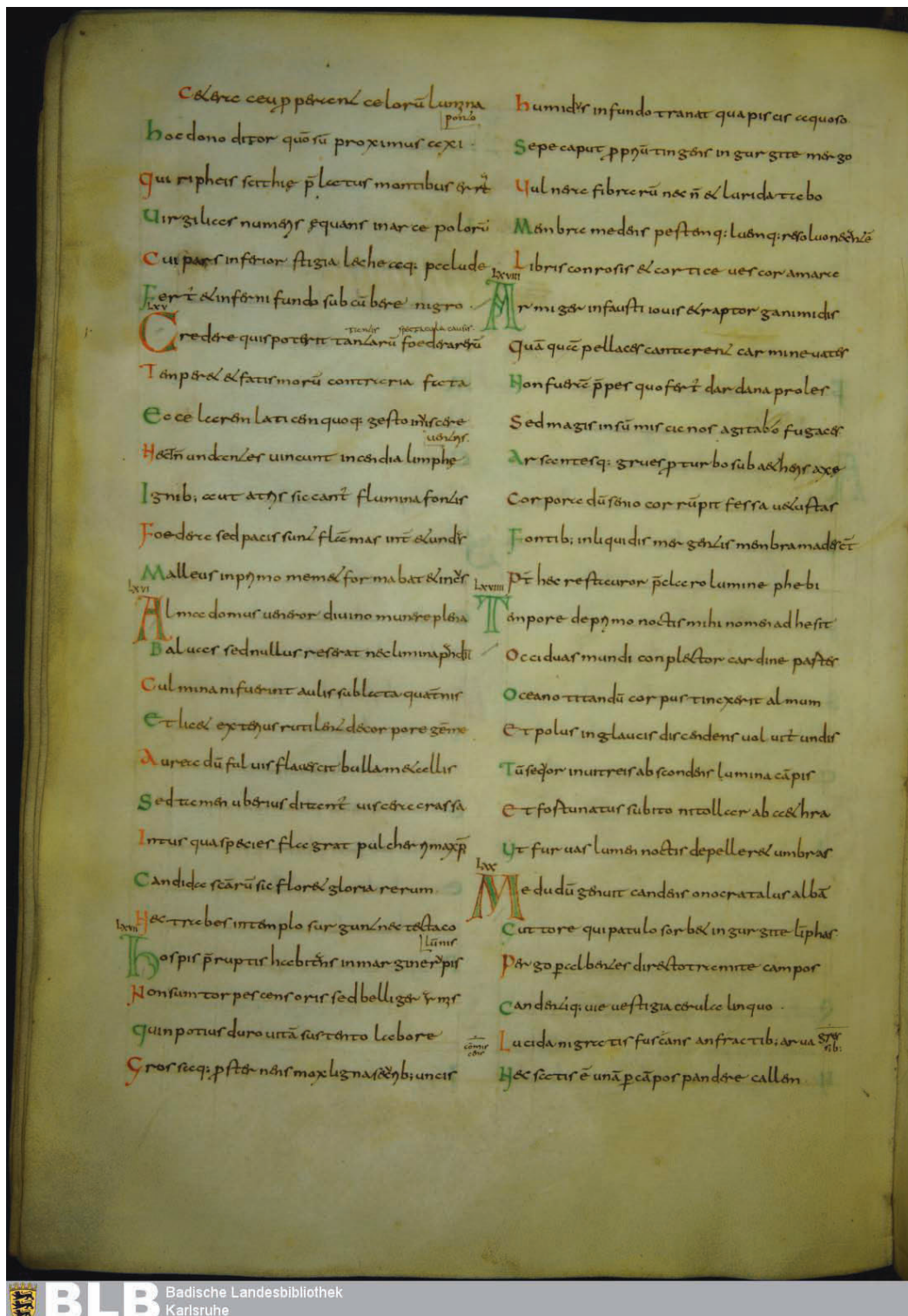
**Figure 32.A** Capsella Brivio, side view. 5<sup>th</sup> century. Silver and gilding, 5.7 x 12.0 x 5.5 cm. Musée du Louvre, Paris. From: Musée du Louvre, <http://www.louvre.fr/en/oeuvre-notices/reliquary-casket>, accessed April 27 2017.



**Figure 32.B:** Capsella Brivio, side view with clasp. From: Musée du Louvre, <http://www.louvre.fr/en/oeuvre-notices/reliquary-casket>, accessed April 27 2017.



**Figure 32.C:** Capsella Brivio, lid. From: Musée du Louvre, <http://www.louvre.fr/en/oeuvre-notices/reliquary-casket>, accessed April 27 2017.



**Figure 33:** *Epistola ad Acircium*, MS Aug. perg. 85, fol. 18v. 9<sup>th</sup> century. Vellum and pigment, 32.5 x 23.1 cm. Badische Landesbibliothek Karlsruhe, Baden. From Badische Landesbibliothek Karlsruhe, <https://digital.blb-karlsruhe.de/blbhs/content/titleinfo/19784>, accessed May 2 2017.





**Figure 34.A:** Gandersheim shrine. 8<sup>th</sup>–9<sup>th</sup> century. Copper alloy and whale bone, 12.6 x 12.6 x 6.8 cm. Herzog Anton Ulrich-Museum, Brunswick. From: *Das Gandersheimer Runenkästchen: Internationales Kolloquium*, ed. Regine Marth, (Braunschweig: Herzog Anton Ulrich-Braunschweig, 2000), 11.



**Figure 34.B:** Gandersheim shrine, back. From: *Das Gandersheimer Runenkästchen: Internationales Kolloquium*, ed. Regine Marth, (Braunschweig: Herzog Anton Ulrich-Braunschweig, 2000), 12.





**Figure 34.C:** Gandersheim shrine, left side. From: *Das Gandersheimer Runenkästchen: Internationales Kolloquium*, ed. Regine Marth, (Braunschweig: Herzog Anton Ulrich-Braunschweig, 2000), 13.



**Figure 34.D:** Gandersheim shrine, right side. From: *Das Gandersheimer Runenkästchen: Internationales Kolloquium*, ed. Regine Marth, (Braunschweig: Herzog Anton Ulrich-Braunschweig, 2000), 13.



**Figure 34.E:** Gandersheim shrine, base. From: *Das Gandersheimer Runenkästchen: Internationales Kolloquium*, ed. Regine Marth, (Braunschweig: Herzog Anton Ulrich-Braunschweig, 2000), 14.



**Figure 34.F:** Gandersheim shrine, box interior. From: *Das Gandersheimer Runenkästchen: Internationales Kolloquium*, ed. Regine Marth, (Braunschweig: Herzog Anton Ulrich-Braunschweig, 2000), 18.





**Figure 34.G:** Gandersheim shrine, lid interior. From: *Das Gandersheimer Runenkästchen: Internationales Kolloquium*, ed. Regine Marth, (Braunschweig: Herzog Anton Ulrich-Braunschweig, 2000), 18.



**Figure 35.A:** Casket of Mumma or St Mommola from Saint-Benoît-sur-Loire, l'Abbaye de Fleury. 7<sup>th</sup>–8<sup>th</sup> century. Wood and copper alloy, 11.2 x 13.3 x 5.1 cm. Kunsthistorisches Museum, Wein. From: ARTstor, <http://www.artstor.org>, Accessed May 2 2017.

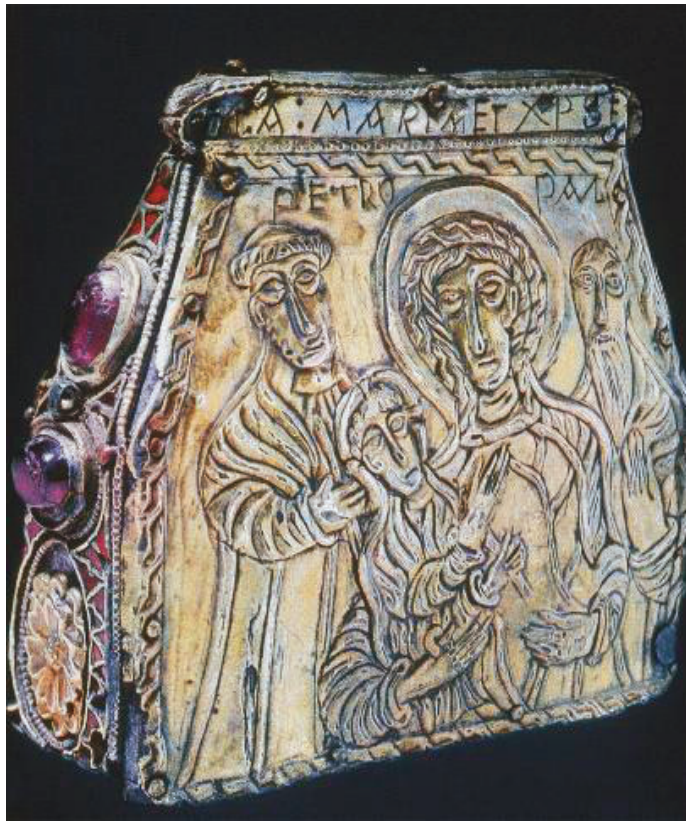




**Figure 35.B:** Casket of Mumma, back. From: Patrick Périn and Laure-Charlotte Feffer, *La Neustrie: les pays au nord de la Loire de Dagobert à Charles le Chauve* (Rouen: Musées et monuments départementaux de Seine-Maritime, 1985), 91.



**Figure 35.C:** Casket of Mumma, left side. From: Patrick Périn and Laure-Charlotte Feffer, *La Neustrie: les pays au nord de la Loire de Dagobert à Charles le Chauve* (Rouen: Musées et monuments départementaux de Seine-Maritime, 1985), 91.



**Figure 36.A:** Purse-shaped shrine with the Madonna between SS Peter and Paul. 7<sup>th</sup>–8<sup>th</sup> century. Copper alloy, gold, silver, glass, wood, and gems, 8.25 x 9.5 x 2.9 cm. Musée de Cluny, Paris. From: ARTstor, <http://www.artstor.org>, accessed May 2 2017.

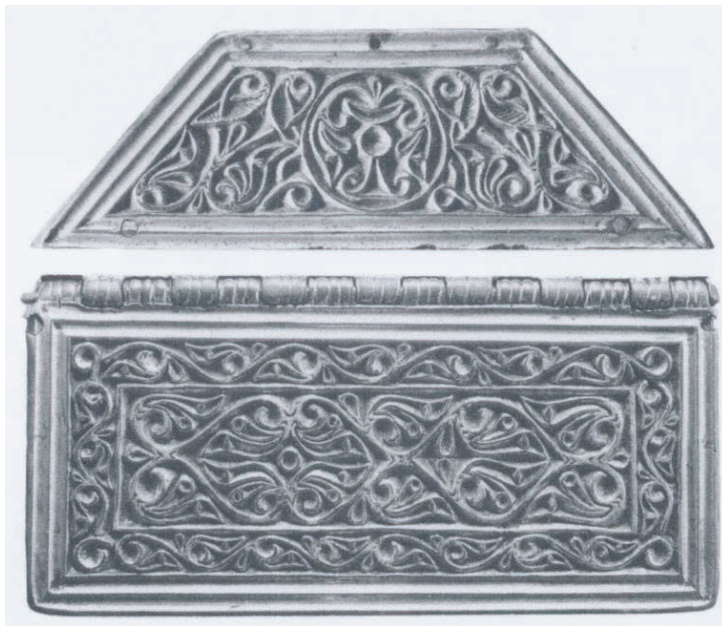


**Figure 36.B:** Purse-shaped shrine, back. From: Dieter Quast, *Das merowingerzeitliche Reliquienkästchen aus Ennabeuren* (Mainz: Schnell & Steiner, 2012), pl. 9.





**Figure 37.A:** Warnebertus shrine. 7<sup>th</sup>–8<sup>th</sup> century. Copper alloy, gilding, garnets, and iron lock, 10.0 x 13.5 x 5 cm. Kirchenschatz des Chorherrenstiftes, Beromünster. From: Kirchenschatz des Chorherrenstiftes, <http://www.stiftberomuenster.ch/kirchenschatz/>, accessed May 2 2017.



**Figure 37.B:** Warnebertus shrine, back. Dieter Quast, *Das merowingerzeitliche Reliquienkästchen aus Ennabeuren* (Mainz: Schnell & Steiner, 2012), pl. 9.



**Figure 37.C:** Warnebertus shrine, left side. From: Daniel Thurre, 'Le reliquaire d'Altheus évêque de Sion et abbé de Saint-Maurice', *Helvetia Archaeologica* 24 (1995/6): 136.



**Figure 37.D:** Warnebertus shrine, base with inscription. From: Daniel Thurre, 'Le reliquaire d'Altheus évêque de Sion et abbé de Saint-Maurice', *Helvetia Archaeologica* 24 (1995/6): 129.

Les émaux de la face postérieure (fig. 17, 18 et 20) datent de la fin du VIII<sup>e</sup> siècle ou du début du IX<sup>e</sup> siècle. Les deux plaques de format trapézoïdal représentent, de manière quasi identique, deux groupes de deux ecclésiastiques en buste, symétriquement ordonnés, présentant un livre de la main gauche voilée et bénissant, d'une manière aussi étonnante qu'inconfortable, de l'autre. Ils sont disposés dans la plus stricte frontalité, à la manière des consuls sur les diptyques d'ivoire du V<sup>e</sup> siècle. Le médaillon montre un personnage différemment vêtu, avec tonsure également, mais n'effectuant pas le geste de bénédiction.

Ces émaux se trouvaient certainement sur le reliquaire dès l'origine, bien que nous ne puissions pas en fournir la preuve. Cette face a subi des déprédations et a été fortement restaurée. Du cadre original hachuré, ne subsistent que deux petits fragments.

La grande fleur repoussée qui orne le rampant est une adjonction tardive. La date de son exécution est connue grâce aux archives du Chapitre: en 1672, deux artisans milanais ont été payés pour nettoyer toutes les pièces d'orfèvrerie des deux églises sédunoises. La même source rapporte qu'une restauration du reliquaire d'*Altheus* a été effectuée en 1673 par l'orfèvre «Reis» [13]. Il s'agit de Johann Nikolaus Ryss, fils de Nikolaus, établi à Sion à cette époque et actif à Notre-Dame de Valère dès 1667. Le bénitier récemment acquis par les Musées Cantonaux à Sion, aux armoiries d'alliance de Riedmatten-Lambien, signé JNR et daté de 1676, démontre qu'il n'y a aucun doute sur l'identité de l'orfèvre: on retrouve, dans ces fleurs repoussées et guillochées, la même main que celle qui exécuta l'hélianthe du reliquaire d'*Altheus* (fig. 21). Quelques œuvres de Johann Nikolaus sont connues: une timbale, vers 1700, conservée au Musée d'Art et d'Histoire de Genève, ainsi qu'un calice en argent repoussé et doré, de la fin du XVII<sup>e</sup> siècle, à la paroisse de Martigny.

Lors du nouvel assemblage, une erreur a été commise, montrant de manière plus évidente encore que les émaux

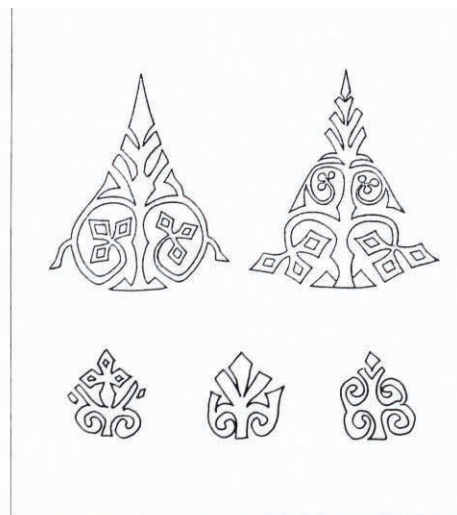
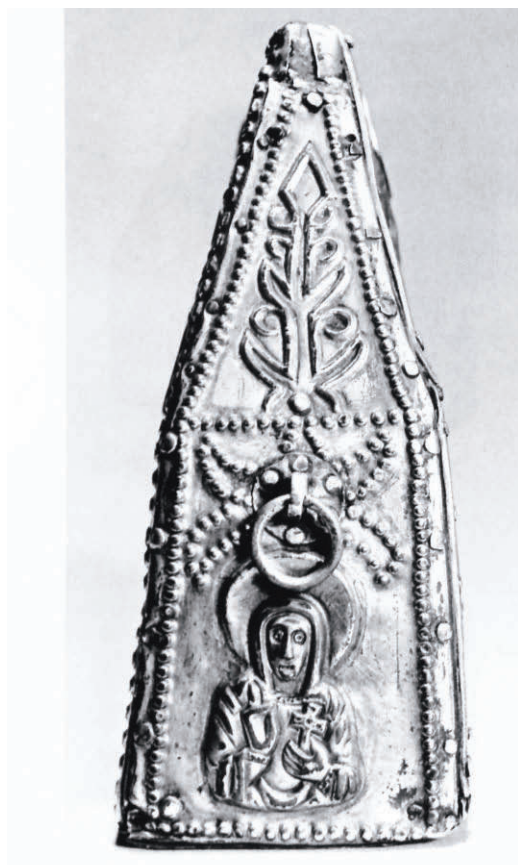




**Figure 38.A:** Altheus shrine. 780–800s. Silver, enamel, and wood, 15.0 x 16.0 x 6.0 cm. Sion Cathedral, Sion. From: ARTstor, <http://www.artstor.org>, accessed May 2 2017.



**Figure 38.B:** Altheus shrine, back. From: Daniel Thurre, 'Le reliquaire d'Altheus évêque de Sion et abbé de Saint-Maurice', *Helvetica Archaeologica* 24 (1995/6): 130.



lées (avec onciale): DANIEL – MAR – PTRVS. On retrouve ce genre de graffiti, mais servant d'authentique cette fois, sur la petite bourse carolingienne du trésor de Saint-Maurice portant dès lors le nom d'«Eleuthère et Candide» (fig. 16). Cette bourse, agrémentée d'un perlé, est ornée d'un côté d'un arbre de vie formant rinceaux sur trois niveaux et, de l'autre, de cabochons translucides disposés en forme de croix (fig. 1). Sa datation varie selon les auteurs entre le IX<sup>e</sup> et X<sup>e</sup> siècles. L'argumentation pour une datation tardive se base sur le fait que l'arbre est d'un graphisme relativement complexe pour l'époque carolingienne, et surtout sur l'agencement symbolique en forme de croix des cabochons, ainsi que sur la manière dont ils sont sertis.

**Figure 38.C:** Altheus shrine, left side. From: Daniel Thurre, 'Le reliquaire d'Altheus évêque de Sion et abbé de Saint-Maurice', *Helvetia Archaeologica* 24 (1995/6): 134.



**Figure 38.D:** Altheus shrine, base with inscription. From: Daniel Thurre, 'Le reliquaire d'Altheus évêque de Sion et abbé de Saint-Maurice', *Helvetia Archaeologica* 24 (1995/6): 127.





**Figure 39:** Votive crown of King Recceswinth from the Treasure of Guarrazar. 7<sup>th</sup> century. Gold, garnets, coloured glass, pearls, and gems, 10.0 cm height and 20.6 cm diameter. Museo Arqueológico Nacional, Madrid. From: Flickr, <https://www.flickr.com/photos/paulayjesus/5392528577/>, Accessed May 2 2017.

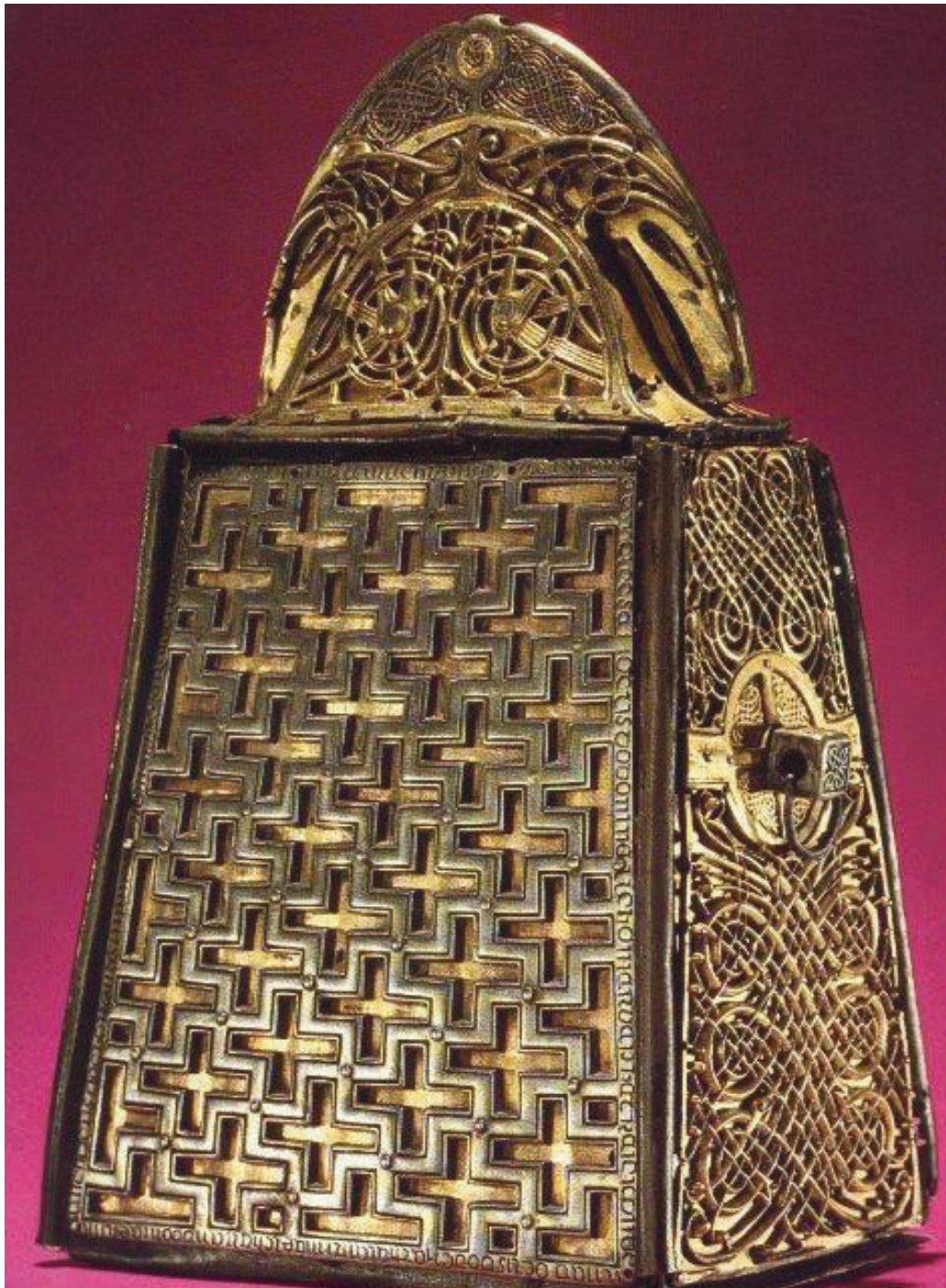


**Figure 40:** Bell of Clogher. 8<sup>th</sup> century. Bronze, 25 cm height. The National Museum of Ireland, Dublin. From: *Treasures of Early Irish Art 1500 B.C. to 1500 A.D.*, ed. Polly Cone (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1977), 135.



**Figure 41:** Clog beannuichte. 8<sup>th</sup> century. Bronze, 29.8 cm height. The National Museum of Ireland, Dublin. From: *The Diocese of Dromore*, Accessed May 2 2017, <http://lisburn.com/books/dromore-diocese/parish-seagoe.html>.





**Figure 42.A:** Bell of the Testament, back. 11<sup>th</sup>–12<sup>th</sup> century. Copper alloy, rock crystal, gold, silver, gems, and enamel, 19.5 x 12.5 cm x 10.0 cm. The National Museum of Ireland, Dublin. From: *Treasures of Early Irish Art 1500 B.C. to 1500 A.D.*, ed. Polly Cone (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1977), 199.





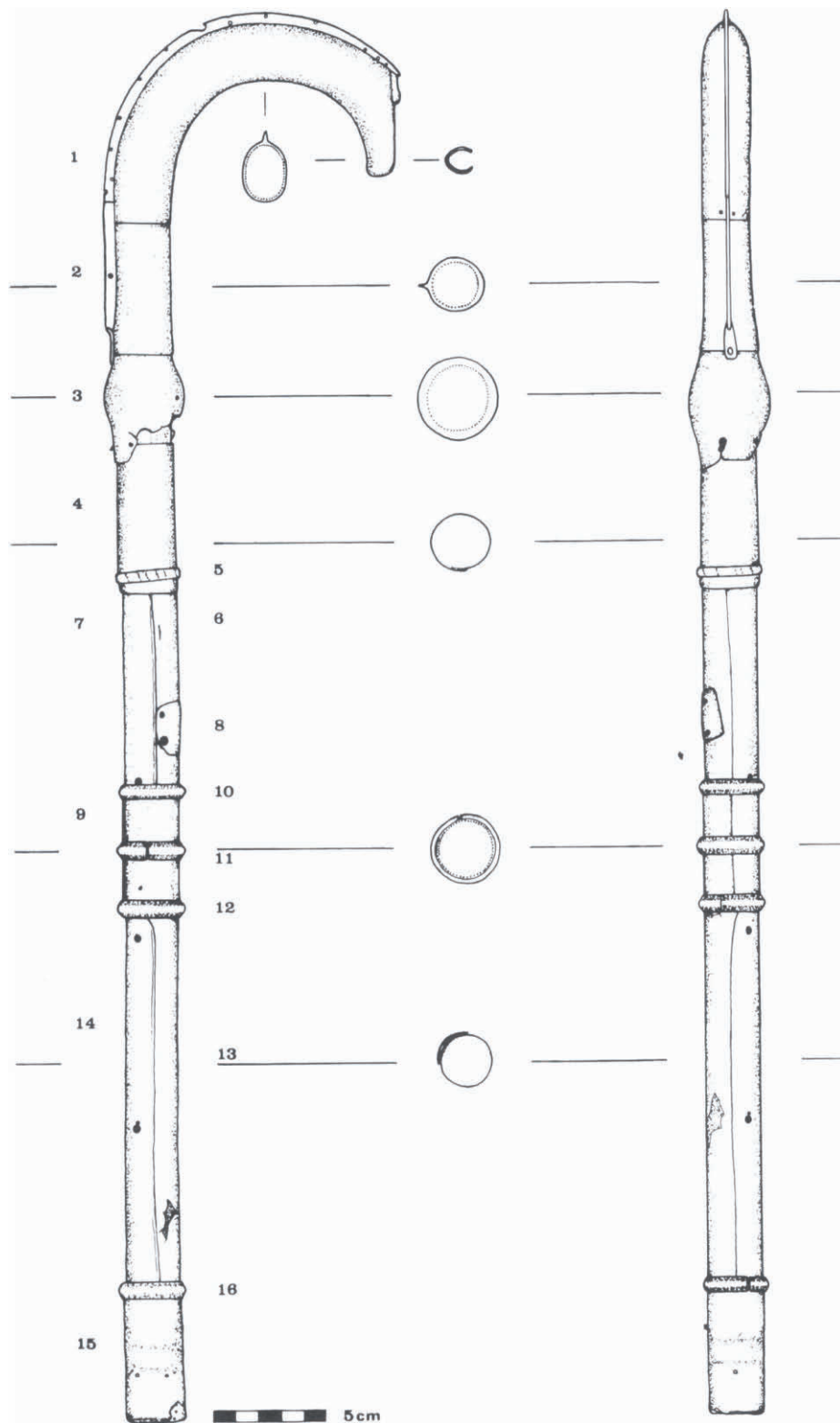
61. Shrine of St. Patrick's bell

**Figure 42.B:** Bell of the Testament, front. From: *Treasures of Early Irish Art 1500 B.C. to 1500 A.D.*, ed. Polly Cone (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1977), 197.



**Figure 42.C:** Bell of the Testament, right side. From: *Treasures of Early Irish Art 1500 B.C. to 1500 A.D.*, ed. Polly Cone (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1977), 198.





**Figure 43:** Inishmurray crozier, illustration. From: Cormac Bourke, 'A Crozier and Bell from Inishmurray and Their Place in Ninth-Century Irish Archaeology', *Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy: Archaeology, Culture, History, Literature. Section C: Archaeology, Celtic Studies, History, Linguistics, Literature* 85C (1985): 147.



**Figure 44.A:** Kells crozier. 9<sup>th</sup>–11<sup>th</sup> century. Copper alloy, silver, gilding, and wood, 133.0 cm length. The British Museum, London. From: The British Museum, [http://www.britishmuseum.org/research/collection\\_online/collection\\_object\\_details.aspx?objectId=86460&partId=1](http://www.britishmuseum.org/research/collection_online/collection_object_details.aspx?objectId=86460&partId=1), accessed May 2 2017.



**Figure 44.B:** Kells crozier crook inscription. From: The British Museum, [http://www.britishmuseum.org/research/collection\\_online/collection\\_object\\_details.aspx?objectId=86460&partId=1](http://www.britishmuseum.org/research/collection_online/collection_object_details.aspx?objectId=86460&partId=1), accessed May 2 2017.



**Figure 45:** Lismore crozier. 12<sup>th</sup> century. Silver, copper alloy, wood, and *millefiori*, 101.6 cm length. The National Museum of Ireland, Dublin. From: The National Museum of Ireland, <http://www.museum.ie>, accessed May 2 2017.





**Figure 46:** Soiscél Molaise book-shrine. 11<sup>th</sup> century. Copper alloy, silver, and gold, 14.0 x 8.2 x 11.4 cm. The National Museum of Ireland, Dublin. From: *Treasures of Early Irish Art 1500 B.C. to 1500 A.D.*, ed. Polly Cone (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1977), 171.





**Figure 47.A:** Ranvaik shrine, showing wear from using the locking pin, back.  
 Photograph: Samuel Gerace III. © Nationalmuseet, Copenhagen.



**Figure 47.B:** Ranvaik shrine, showing wear from using the locking pin, front.  
 Photograph: Samuel Gerace III. © Nationalmuseet, Copenhagen.



**Figure 48:** Monymusk cross-slab. 9<sup>th</sup> century. Stone, 2.13 m height. St Mary's Parish Church, Monymusk. From: Canmore, <https://canmore.org.uk/collection/337008>, accessed May 10 2017.





**Figure 49.A:** Killadeas cross-slab, side A. 8<sup>th</sup> century. Stone, 1.57 x 0.91 x 0.11 m. Killadeas, Co. Fermanagh. From: Ancient Ireland, <http://www.ancientireland.org/killadeas/>, accessed May 11 2017.

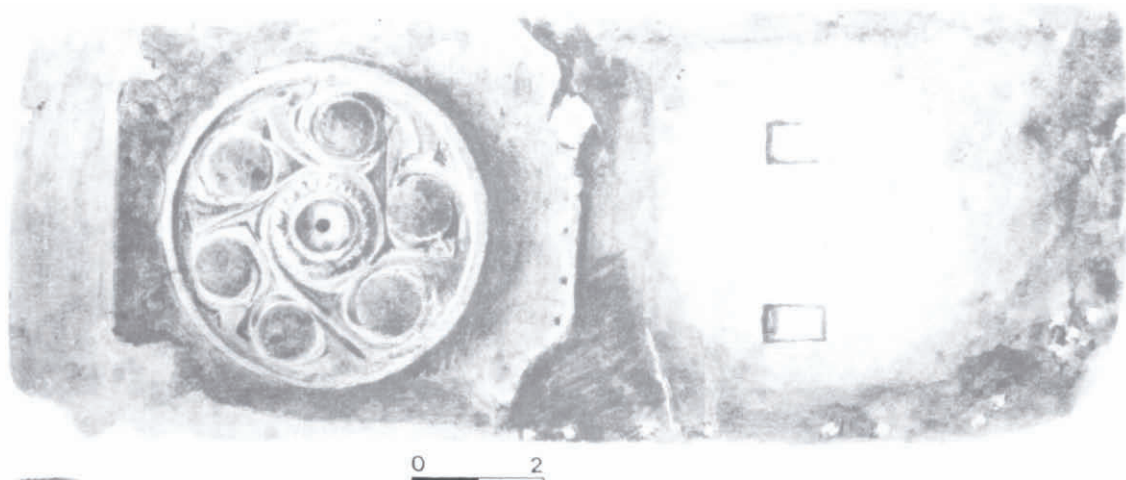




**Figure 49.B:** Killadeas cross-slab, side B. From: Ancient Ireland, <http://www.ancientireland.org/killadeas/>, accessed May 11 2017.

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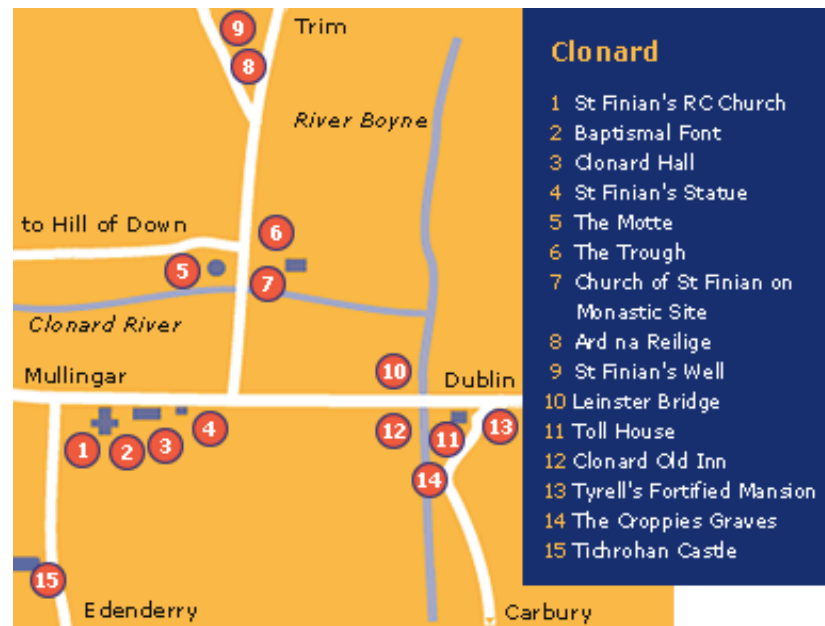
**Figure 49.C:** Inscription on the Killadeas cross-slab. From: Dorothy Lowry-Corry, 'The Sculptured Stones at Killadeas', *The Journal of the Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland* Seventh Series, 5, no. 1 (1935): 25.



Pl. II. Plunket's watercolour of shrine components, 1846.

**Figure 50:** James Plunket's 1846 illustration of the Clonard shrine. From: Ragnall Ó Floinn, 'A Fragmentary House-Shaped Shrine from Clonard, Co. Meath', *The Journal of Irish Archaeology* 5 (1989/1990): 51.

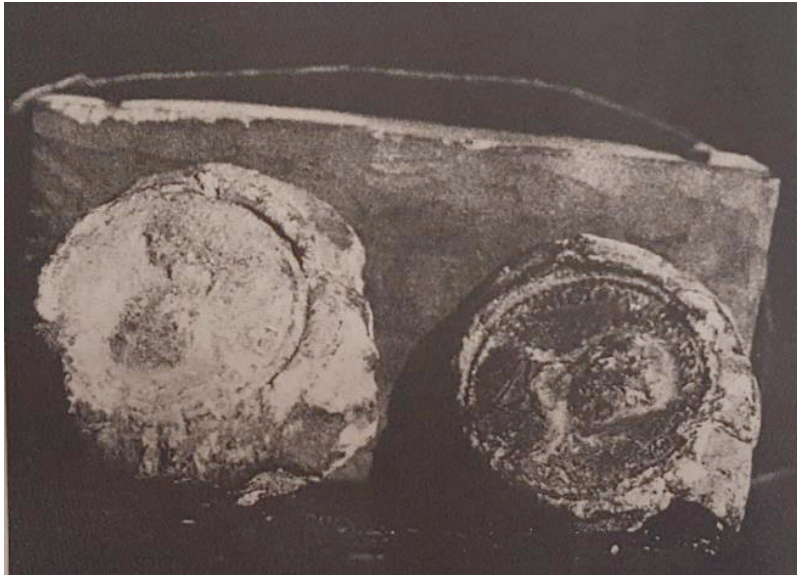




**Figure 51:** Map of present day Clonard marking site of the original monastery (#7) by the Clonard River. Meath County Council. From: Moynalty Heritage Trail, <http://www.meath.ie/Tourism/Heritage/HeritageTrails/MoynaltyHeritageTrail/>, accessed May 10 2017.



**Figure 52:** Map of Keelogue Ford and possible find-spot of the Shannon shrine based on the Shannon Commissioners reports. From: Google Maps, <https://www.google.com/maps/@53.1730983,-8.0818659,14z>, accessed May 10 2017.



**Figure 53.A:** Wax seals discovered with the Amiata shrine. From: Fabrizio Mancinelli, 'Relique e Reliquiari ad Abbazia S. Salvatore', *Rendiconti della Pontificia Accademia Romana di Archeologia* 46 (1975): 254.



**Figure 53.B:** Wax seal, detail. From: Fabrizio Mancinelli, 'Relique e Reliquiari ad Abbazia S. Salvatore', *Rendiconti della Pontificia Accademia Romana di Archeologia* 46 (1975): 255.

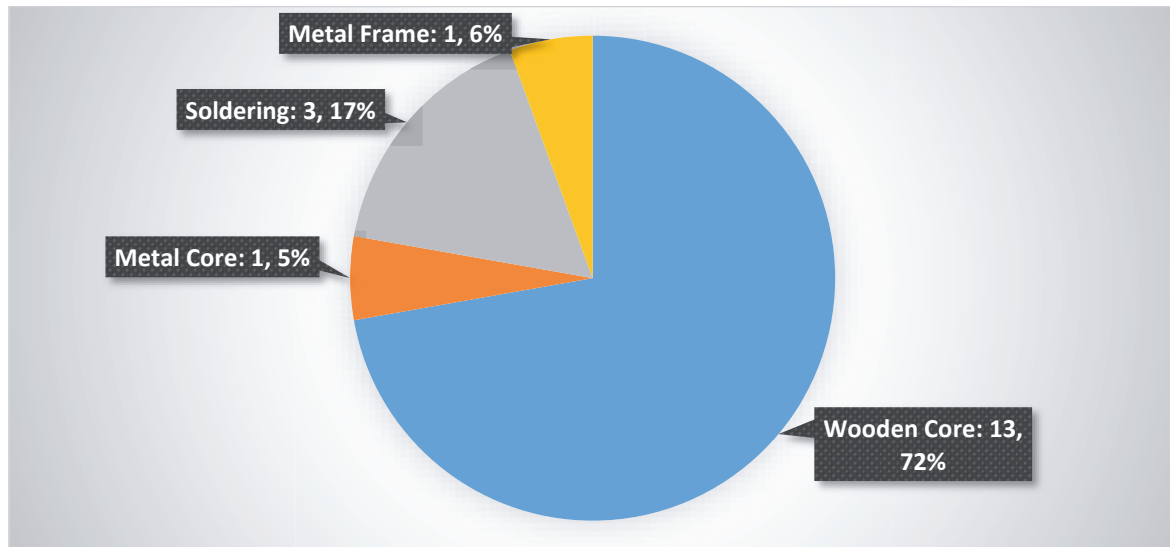


**Figure 54.A:** Pyramidal portable shrine. 8<sup>th</sup> century. Wood, copper alloy, and gilding, 4.0 cm height. Schatzkammer der St. Catharienenkirche Maaseik, Belgium. From: *Kunst und Kultur der Karolingerzeit*, ed. Christoph Stiegemann and Matthias Wemhoff (Mainz: Philipp von Zabern, 1999), 529.

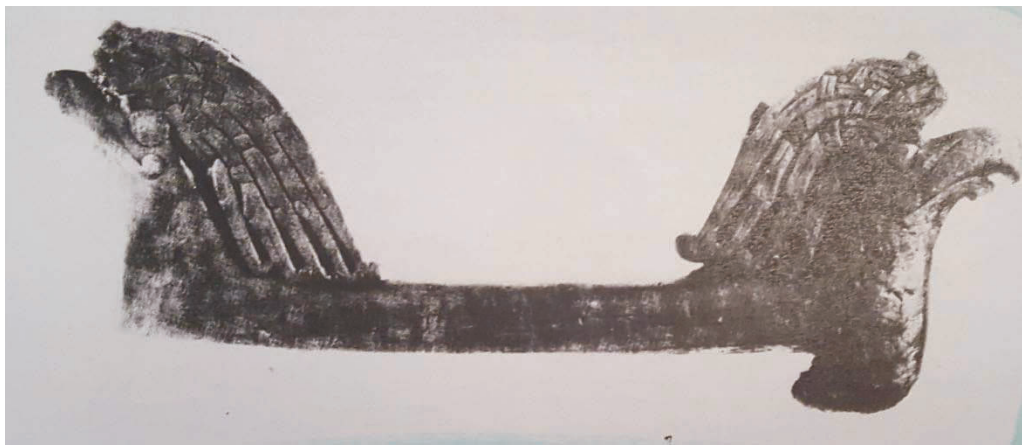


**Figure 54.B:** Pyramidal Portable shrine, base. From: *Kunst und Kultur der Karolingerzeit*, ed. Christoph Stiegemann and Matthias Wemhoff (Mainz: Philipp von Zabern, 1999), 529.





**Figure 55:** Insular house-shaped shrines foundation materials and main means of production.



**Figure 56:** Ornamented wooden object. 11<sup>th</sup> century. Wood, 27.0 cm length. The National Museum of Ireland, Dublin. From: James T. Lang, 'Eleventh-Century Style in Decorated Wood from Dublin', in *Ireland and Insular Art A.D. 500-1200*, ed. Michael Ryan (Dublin: Royal Irish Academy, 1987), 285.



**Figure 57:** Early medieval purse-mount. 6<sup>th</sup>–7<sup>th</sup> century. Copper alloy, 9.31 cm length. Portable Antiquities Scheme, HAMP-23A7D7. From: Portable Antiquities Scheme, <https://finds.org.uk/database/artefacts/record/id/148027>, accessed May 16 2017.



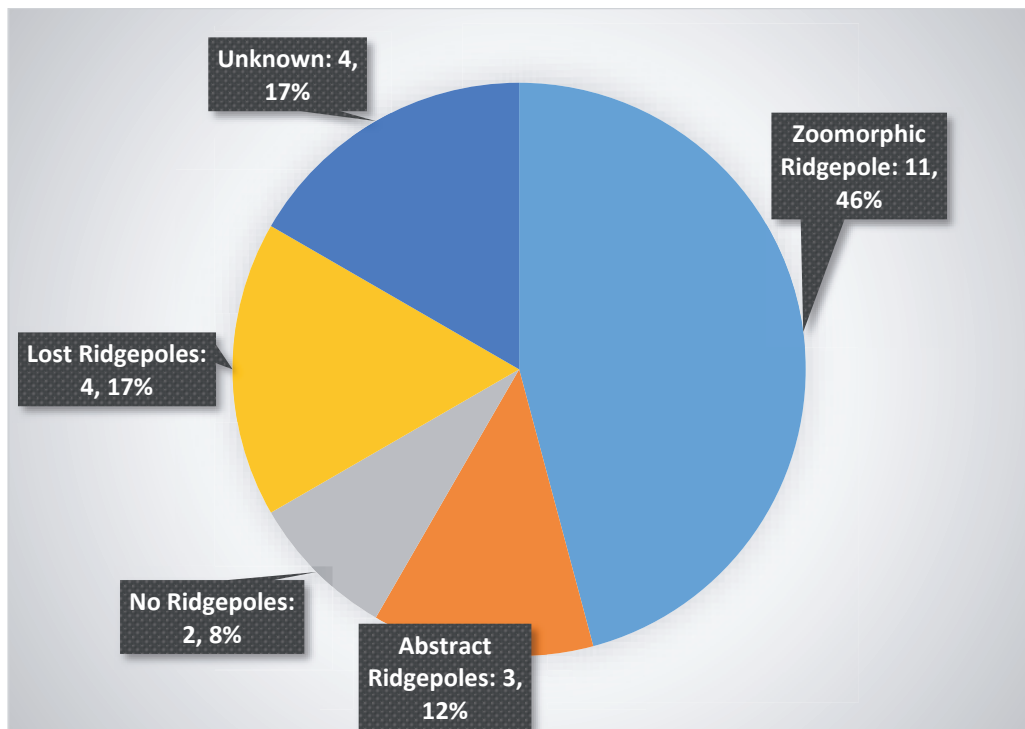
**Figure 58.A:** Shrine lid. 11<sup>th</sup> century. Wood. The National Museum of Ireland, Dublin. Photograph: Samuel Thomas Gerace III. © The National Museum of Ireland.



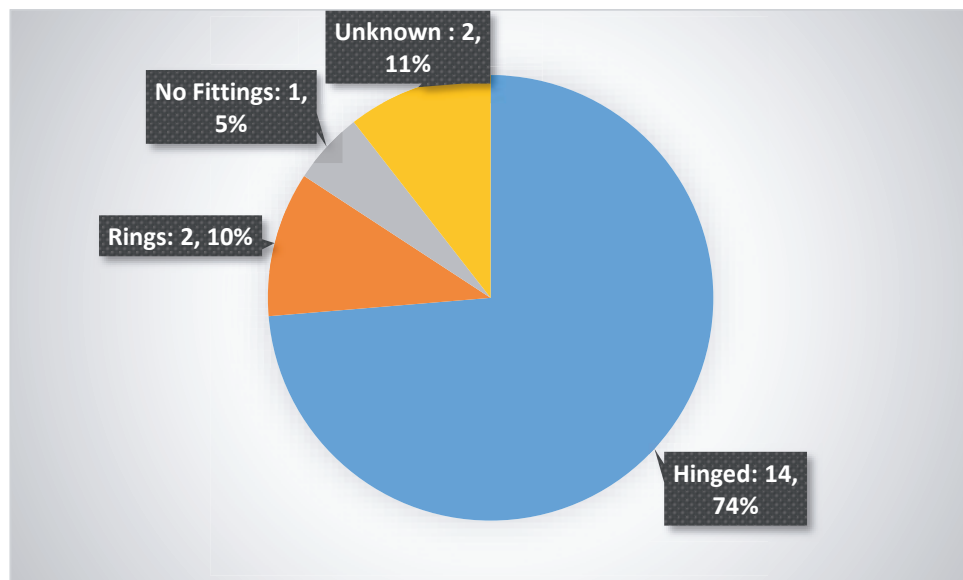
**Figure 58.B:** Shrine lid, side view. Photograph: Samuel Thomas Gerace III. © The National Museum of Ireland.



**Figure 58.C:** Shrine lid, interior. Photograph: Samuel Thomas Gerace III. © The National Museum of Ireland.



**Figure 59:** Distribution of Insular house-shaped shrines with ridgepoles, including whether the ridgepole terminals are zoomorphic or geometric.



**Figure 60:** Distribution of Insular house-shaped shrine suspension fittings.



**Figure 61:** Leather worker's toolbox. 640–860. Wood. The National Museum of Scotland, Edinburgh. From: The National Museum of Scotland, <http://www.nms.ac.uk/national-museum-of-scotland/>, accessed May 16 2017.



**Figure 62.A:** Container from an eighth-century grave in Dromiskin, Ireland. 6<sup>th</sup>–7<sup>th</sup> century. Stone, 2.9 x 6.2 x 4.6 cm. The National Museum of Ireland, Dublin. © The National Museum of Ireland.

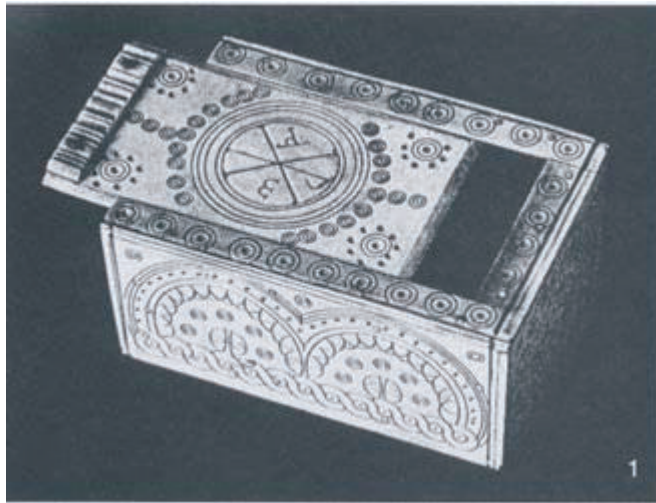




**Figure 62.B:** Container found inside the stone box from the eighth-century grave in Dromiskin, Ireland. 6<sup>th</sup>–7<sup>th</sup> century. Wood and copper alloy. The National Museum of Ireland, Dublin. © The National Museum of Ireland.



**Figure 63:** Gold Casket from Pula, Croatia. 5<sup>th</sup> century. Gold and enamel, 1.6 x 2.3 x 1.9 cm. Kunsthistorisches, Vienna. From: *Credo: Christianisierung Europas im Mittelalter*, ed. Christoph Stiegemann, Martin Kroker and Wolfgang Walter, 2 vols., vol. 2 (Petersberg: Ihmof, 2013), 130.



**Figure 64:** Bone Box (reconstructed) from a sixth-century female grave in Heilbronn, Germany. 5<sup>th</sup>–6<sup>th</sup> century. Bone and wood, 5.4 x 11.4 x 7.8 cm. From: Dieter Quast, *Das merowingerzeitliche Reliquienkästchen aus Ennabeuren* (Mainz: Schnell & Steiner, 2012), illustration 72.1.



**Figure 65:** Set of three shrines found near Varna, Bulgaria. 5<sup>th</sup>–6<sup>th</sup> century. Marble (alabaster?), silver, gold, enamel, and gems, stone shrine: 15.6 x 22.4 x 15.5 cm; silver shrine: 11.0 x 9.3 x 5.6 cm; gold shrine: 3.8 x 6.05 x 4.7 cm. Museum of Archaeology, Varna. From: Balkan Heritage Field School, <https://www.bhfieldschool.org/project/VARexc>, accessed May 16 2017.



**Figure 66.A:** Casket with scenes from the Book of Kings. 8<sup>th</sup> century. Ivory, copper alloy, and gilding, 9.0 x 12.5 x 6.0 cm. Glencairn Museum, Bryn Athyn. From: Glencairn Museum News, <https://glencairnmuseum.org/newsletter/march-2013-mysterious-medieval-box-with-palm-sunday-imagery.html>, accessed May 16 2017.



**Figure 66.B:** Casket with scenes from the Book of Kings, back. From: Glencairn Museum News, <https://glencairnmuseum.org/newsletter/march-2013-mysterious-medieval-box-with-palm-sunday-imagery.html>, accessed May 16 2017.





**Figure 66.C:** Casket with scenes from the Book of Kings, left side. From: Glencairn Museum News, <https://glencairnmuseum.org/newsletter/march-2013-mysterious-medieval-box-with-palm-sunday-imagery.html>, accessed May 16 2017.



**Figure 66.D:** Casket with scenes from the Book of Kings, right side. From: Glencairn Museum News, <https://glencairnmuseum.org/newsletter/march-2013-mysterious-medieval-box-with-palm-sunday-imagery.html>, accessed May 16 2017.



**Figure 66.E:** Casket with scenes from the Book of Kings, lid. From: Glencairn Museum News, <https://glencairnmuseum.org/newsletter/march-2013-mysterious-medieval-box-with-palm-sunday-imagery.html>, accessed May 16 2017.



**Figure 66.F:** Casket with scenes from the Book of Kings, interior. From: Glencairn Museum News, <https://glencairnmuseum.org/newsletter/march-2013-mysterious-medieval-box-with-palm-sunday-imagery.html>, accessed May 16 2017.





**Figure 67.A:** Franks casket. 8<sup>th</sup> century. Whale bone, 10.9 x 22.9 x 19.0 cm. The British Museum, London. From: The British Museum, [http://www.britishmuseum.org/research/collection\\_online/collection\\_object\\_details.aspx?objectId=92560&partId=1](http://www.britishmuseum.org/research/collection_online/collection_object_details.aspx?objectId=92560&partId=1), accessed May 16 2017.



**Figure 67.B:** Franks casket, back. From: The British Museum, [http://www.britishmuseum.org/research/collection\\_online/collection\\_object\\_details.aspx?objectId=92560&partId=1](http://www.britishmuseum.org/research/collection_online/collection_object_details.aspx?objectId=92560&partId=1), accessed May 16 2017.



**Figure 67.C:** Franks casket, side. From: The British Museum, [http://www.britishmuseum.org/research/collection\\_online/collection\\_object\\_details.aspx?objectId=92560&partId=1](http://www.britishmuseum.org/research/collection_online/collection_object_details.aspx?objectId=92560&partId=1), accessed May 16 2017.



**Figure 67.D:** Franks casket, side. From: The British Museum, [http://www.britishmuseum.org/research/collection\\_online/collection\\_object\\_details.aspx?objectId=92560&partId=1](http://www.britishmuseum.org/research/collection_online/collection_object_details.aspx?objectId=92560&partId=1), accessed May 16 2017.

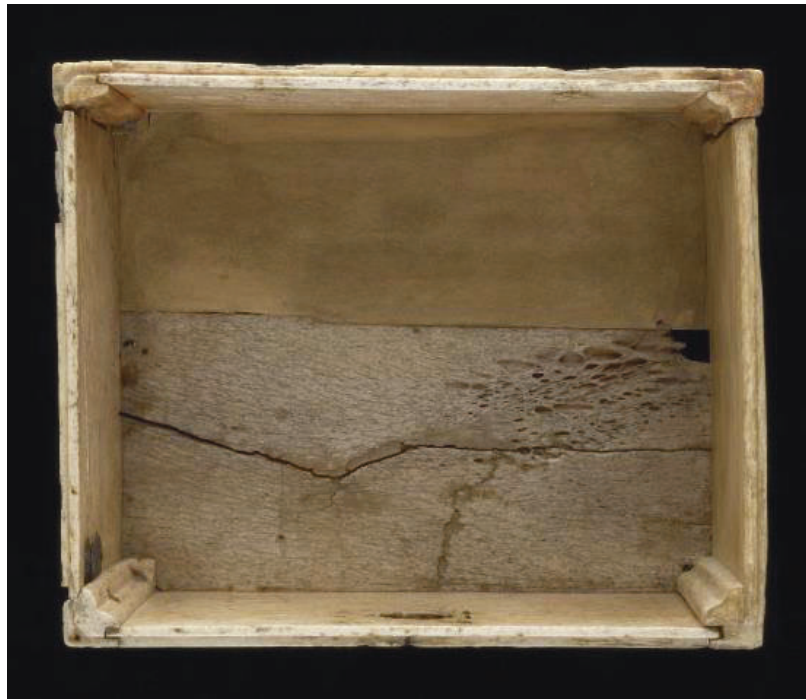




**Figure 67.E:** Franks casket, lid. From: The British Museum, [http://www.britishmuseum.org/research/collection\\_online/collection\\_object\\_details.aspx?objectId=92560&partId=1](http://www.britishmuseum.org/research/collection_online/collection_object_details.aspx?objectId=92560&partId=1), accessed May 16 2017.



**Figure 67.F:** Franks casket, lid interior. From: The British Museum, [http://www.britishmuseum.org/research/collection\\_online/collection\\_object\\_details.aspx?objectId=92560&partId=1](http://www.britishmuseum.org/research/collection_online/collection_object_details.aspx?objectId=92560&partId=1), accessed May 16 2017.



**Figure 67.G:** Franks casket, box interior. From: The British Museum, [http://www.britishmuseum.org/research/collection\\_online/collection\\_object\\_details.aspx?objectId=92560&partId=1](http://www.britishmuseum.org/research/collection_online/collection_object_details.aspx?objectId=92560&partId=1), accessed May 16 2017.



**Figure 68.A:** Casket with scenes from the Life of Christ. circa 1050. Boxwood, copper alloy, and glass, 8.95 x 15.71 x 7.79 cm. The Cleveland Museum of Art, Cleveland. From: The Cleveland Museum of Art, <http://www.clevelandart.org/art/1953.362>, accessed May 16 2017.





**Figure 68.B:** Casket with scenes from the Life of Christ, back. From: The Cleveland Museum of Art, <http://www.clevelandart.org/art/1953.362>, accessed May 16 2017.



**Figure 68.C:** Casket with scenes from the Life of Christ, left side. From: The Cleveland Museum of Art, <http://www.clevelandart.org/art/1953.362>, accessed May 16 2017.



**Figure 68.D:** Casket with scenes from the Life of Christ, right side. From: The Cleveland Museum of Art, <http://www.clevelandart.org/art/1953.362>, accessed May 16 2017.



**Figure 69:** Moylough belt-shrine. 8<sup>th</sup> century. Copper alloy, enamel, and silver, 23.0 cm diameter. The National Museum of Ireland, Dublin. From: Irish Archaeology, <https://irisharchaeology.ie/2013/05/the-moylough-belt-shrine/>, accessed May 16 2017.





**Figure 70:** Killua bell-shrine fragment. 8<sup>th</sup>–9<sup>th</sup> century. Copper alloy, gilding, amber, and tinning, 13.2 x 5.96 cm. The National Museum of Ireland, Dublin. From: Ask About Ireland, <http://www.askaboutireland.ie/aai-files/assets/libraries/national-museum-of-ireland/reading-room/the-virtual-museum/killua-bell-shrine-crest.jpg>, Accessed May 16 2017.



**Figure 71:** St Senan Bell. 12<sup>th</sup> century with 14<sup>th</sup>-century additions. Gilding, copper alloy, and tinning, 13.02 cm height. The National Museum of Ireland, Dublin. From: Pravoslavie, <http://www.pravoslavie.ru/english/78032.htm>, accessed May 16 2017.



**Figure 72:** St Cuileáin shrine. 11–12<sup>th</sup> century. Copper alloy and gilding, 30.0 x 24.0 x 9.6 cm. The British Museum, London. From: Treasures of Heaven, <http://www.learn.columbia.edu/treasuresofheaven/relics/Bell-and-Bell-Shrine-of-St-Cuileain.php>, accessed May 16 2017.





**Figure 73:** Lough Kinale book-shrine. 8<sup>th</sup> century. Copper alloy and wood, 34.5 x 28.0 x 11.0 cm. The National Museum of Ireland, Dublin. From: Eamonn P. Kelly, 'The Lough Kinale Book-Shrine', in *The Age of Migrating Ideas: Early Medieval Art in Northern Britain and Ireland*, ed. Michael Spearman and John Higgitt (Edinburgh: National Museums Scotland, 1993), 169.





**Figure 74.A:** Chur 'chrismal'. 7<sup>th</sup>–8<sup>th</sup> century. Copper alloy, wood, and glass, 16.5 x 18.2 x 5.2 cm. Archäologischer Dienst Graubünden, Chur. From: Dieter Quast, *Das merowingerzeitliche Reliquienkästchen aus Ennabeuren* (Mainz: Schnell & Steiner, 2012), pl. 18.



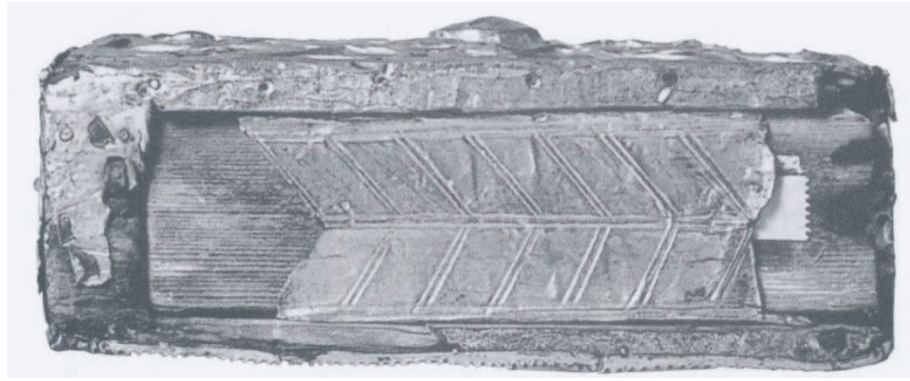
**Figure 74.B:** Chur 'chrismal', back. From: Dieter Quast, *Das merowingerzeitliche Reliquienkästchen aus Ennabeuren* (Mainz: Schnell & Steiner, 2012), pl. 18.



**Figure 74.C:** Chur 'chrismal', left side. From: Dieter Quast, *Das merowingerzeitliche Reliquienkästchen aus Ennabeuren* (Mainz: Schnell & Steiner, 2012), pl. 18.



**Figure 74.D:** Chur 'chrismal', right side. From: Dieter Quast, *Das merowingerzeitliche Reliquienkästchen aus Ennabeuren* (Mainz: Schnell & Steiner, 2012), pl. 18.



**Figure 74.E:** Chur 'chrismal', base. From: Dieter Quast, *Das merowingerzeitliche Reliquienkästchen aus Ennabeuren* (Mainz: Schnell & Steiner, 2012), pl. 18.



**Figure 75.A:** Namur shrine. 7<sup>th</sup>–8<sup>th</sup> century. Copper alloy and oak, 12.5 x 7.5 x 2.5 cm. Musée du Cinquantenaire, Musées royaux d'Art et d'Histoire, Brussels. From: Kornbluth Photography, <http://www.kornbluthphoto.com/Reliquaries1.html>, accessed May 16 2017.





**Figure 75.B:** Namur shrine, back. From: Kornbluth Photography, <http://www.kornbluthphoto.com/Reliquaries1.html>, accessed May 16 2017.



**Figure 76.A:** Casket, 3/4 front view. 6<sup>th</sup>–8<sup>th</sup> century. Bone and pigment, 8.9 x 11.3 x 4.5 cm. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. From: Heilbrunn Timeline of Art History, <http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/works-of-art/65.68.2/>, accessed May 16 2017.



**Figure 76.B:** Casket, front. From: Heilbrunn Timeline of Art History, <http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/works-of-art/65.68.2/>, accessed May 16 2017.



**Figure 76.C:** Casket, top. From: Heilbrunn Timeline of Art History, <http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/works-of-art/65.68.2/>, accessed May 16 2017.





**Figure 76.D:** Casket, box interior. From: Heilbrunn Timeline of Art History, <http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/works-of-art/65.68.2/>, accessed May 16 2017.



**Figure 76.E:** Casket, base. From: Heilbrunn Timeline of Art History, <http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/works-of-art/65.68.2/>, accessed May 16 2017.



**Figure 77.A:** Utrecht shrine. 7<sup>th</sup>–8<sup>th</sup> century. Copper alloy, garnets, gems, and gold, 5.5 x 6.0 x 3.5 cm. Museum Catharijneconvent, Utrecht. From: Museum Het Catharinjneconvent, <http://adlib.catharijneconvent.nl/>, accessed May 16 2017.



**Figure 77.B:** Utrecht shrine, back. From: Museum Catharijneconvent, <http://adlib.catharijneconvent.nl/>, accessed May 16 2017.



**Figure 77.C:** Utrecht shrine, left side. From: Museum Catharijneconvent, <http://adlib.catharijneconvent.nl/>, accessed May 16 2017.



**Figure 77.D:** Utrecht shrine, right side. From: Museum Catharijneconvent, <http://adlib.catharijneconvent.nl/>, accessed May 16 2017.

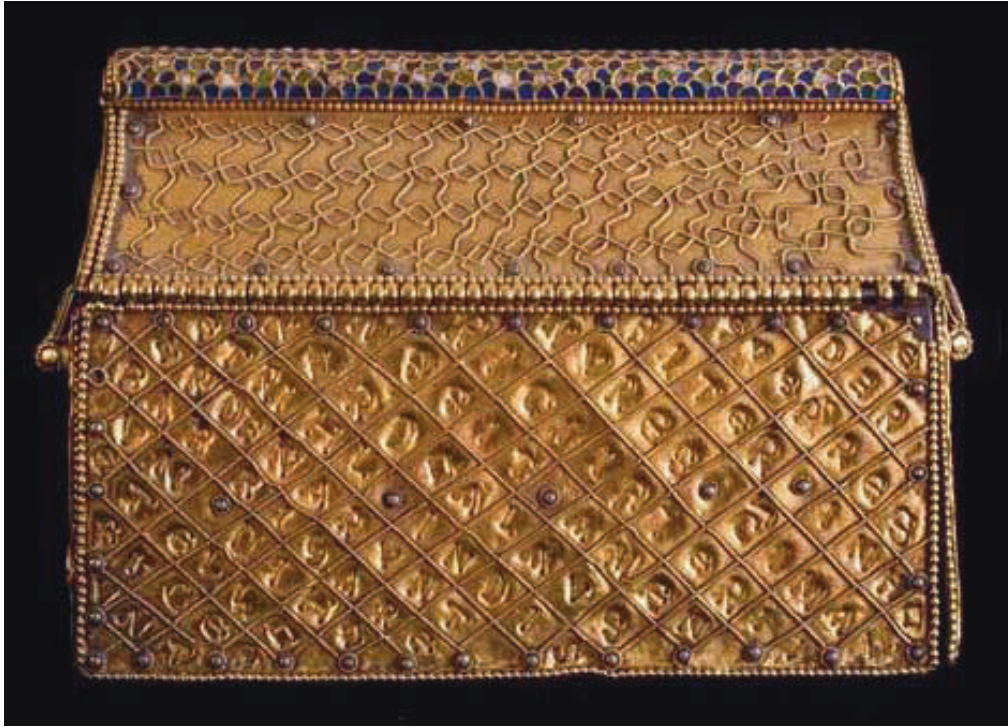




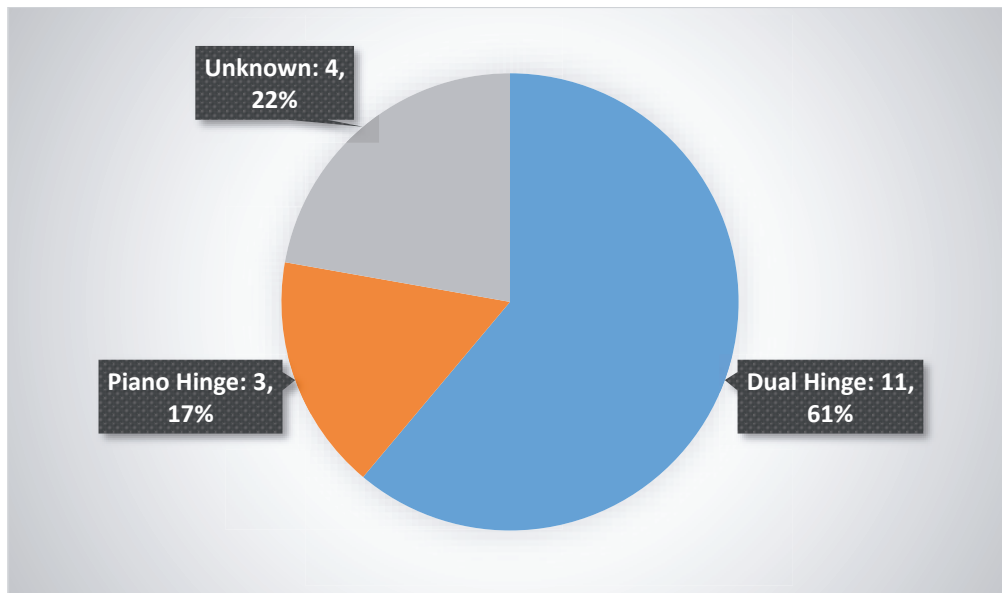
**Figure 77.E:** Utrecht shrine, base. From: Museum Catharijneconvent, <http://adlib.catharijneconvent.nl/>, accessed May 16 2017.



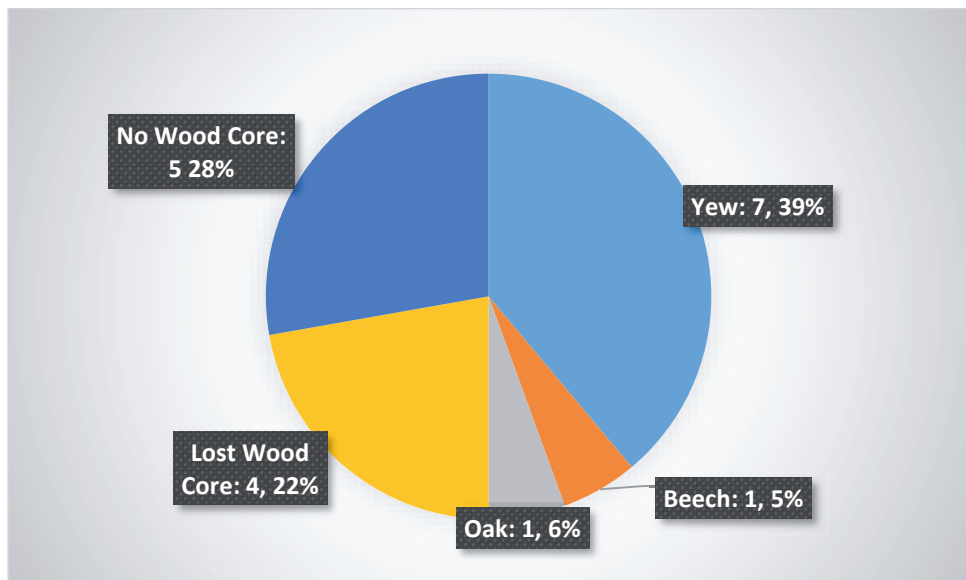
**Figure 78.A:** Casket of Teudéric. 7<sup>th</sup> century. Gold, copper alloy, enamel, wood, and cameos, 12.5 cm x 18.5 x 6.4 cm. Trésor de l'abbaye de Saint-Maurice, Saint-Maurice. From: Patrimonio di Oreficeria Adriatica, <http://www.oreficeriadriatica.it/index.php/archivio-articoli/anno1n0/8-1-nuove-proposte/fotografare-l-oreficeria-ovvero-l-arte-dell-arte-mark-edward-smith>, Accessed May 16 2017.



**Figure 78.B:** Casket of Teudéric, back. From: Patrimonio di Oreficeria Adriatica, <http://www.oreficeriadriatica.it/index.php/archivio-articoli/anno1n0/8-1-nuove-proposte/fotografare-l-oreficeria-ovvero-l-arte-dell-arte-mark-edward-smith>, Accessed May 16 2017.



**Figure 79:** Distribution of Insular house-shaped shrine hinged lids within the group of known Insular house-shaped shrines.



**Figure 80:** Distribution of wooden cores and their genus identifications in Insular house-shaped shrines.



**Figure 81:** Chalice of Duke Tassilo. 777–88. Gilt copper, silver, and niello, 27 cm height. Kremsmünster Abbey, Kremsmünster. From; Joseph Ackley, 'Copper-Alloy Substrates in Precious-Metal Treasury Objects: Concealed and Yet Excessive', *Different Visions*, no. 4 (2014): 18.





**Figure 82:** Derrynaflan chalice. 8<sup>th</sup>–9<sup>th</sup> century, Glass, silver, gold, enamel, and amber, 19.2 cm height 23.0 cm diameter. The National Museum of Ireland, Dublin. From: The National Museum of Ireland, [http://www.museum.ie/Archaeology/Exhibitions/Current-Exhibitions/The-Treasury/Gallery-1-Iron-Age-to-12th-Century/Derrynaflan-Chalice-\(1\)](http://www.museum.ie/Archaeology/Exhibitions/Current-Exhibitions/The-Treasury/Gallery-1-Iron-Age-to-12th-Century/Derrynaflan-Chalice-(1)), accessed May 22 2017.



**Figure 83:** St Ninian's Isle bowl. 8<sup>th</sup>–9<sup>th</sup> century. Silver, gilding, copper alloy, enamel, 3.6 cm height 14.3 cm diameter. The National Museum of Scotland, Edinburgh. From: The National Museum of Scotland, <http://www.nms.ac.uk/national-museum-of-scotland/>, accessed May 22 2017.



**Figure 84:** Glass on the Clonmore shrine (left) and a round escutcheon of the Monymusk shrine (right). Left from: Samuel Thomas Gerace III © The Ulster Museum; Right from: The National Museum of Scotland, <http://www.nms.ac.uk/explore/stories/scottish-history-and-archaeology/monymusk-reliquary/>, accessed May 22 2017.



**Figure 85.A:** Hunterston Brooch. 8<sup>th</sup> century. Silver, gold, amber, 12.2 cm diameter. The National Museum of Scotland, Edinburgh. From: The National Museum of Scotland, <http://www.nms.ac.uk/national-museum-of-scotland/>, accessed May 27 2017.





**Figure 85.B:** Hunterston Brooch, back. From: The National Museum of Scotland, <http://www.nms.ac.uk/national-museum-of-scotland/>, accessed May 27 2017.



**Figure 86:** St Ninian's Isle chape. 8<sup>th</sup>–9<sup>th</sup> century. Silver and glass, 8.13 cm width. The National Museum of Scotland, Edinburgh. From: The National Museum of Scotland, <http://www.nms.ac.uk/national-museum-of-scotland/>, accessed May 27 2017.



**Figure 87.A:** St Ninian's Isle chape. 8<sup>th</sup>–9<sup>th</sup> century. Silver, glass, and gilding, 8.2 cm width. The National Museum of Scotland, Edinburgh. From: The National Museum of Scotland, <http://www.nms.ac.uk/national-museum-of-scotland/>, accessed May 27 2017



**Figure 87.B:** St Ninian's Isle chape, reverse. From: The National Museum of Scotland, <http://www.nms.ac.uk/national-museum-of-scotland/>, accessed May 27 2017

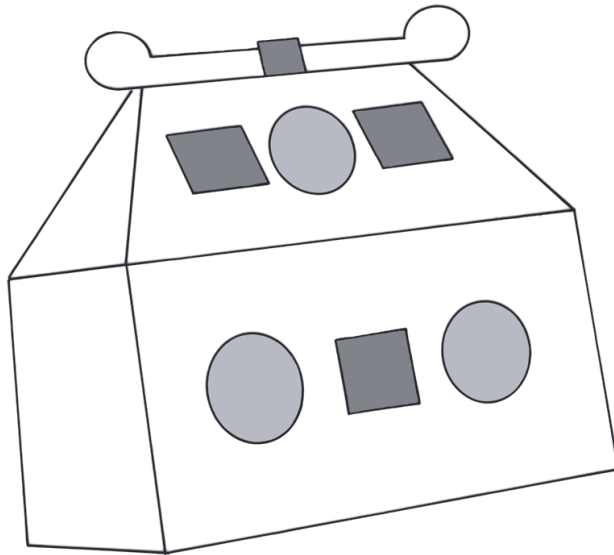


**Figure 88.A:** Ardagh chalice. 8<sup>th</sup> century. Silver, rock crystal, glass, gold, 17.8 cm height 22.8 cm diameter. The National Museum of Ireland, Dublin. From: The National Museum of Ireland, [http://www.museum.ie/Archaeology/Visit-the-Museum/Things-to-See-Do/The-Ardagh-Chalice-\(1\)](http://www.museum.ie/Archaeology/Visit-the-Museum/Things-to-See-Do/The-Ardagh-Chalice-(1)), accessed May 22 2017



**Figure 88.B:** Ardagh chalice, base. From: The National Museum of Ireland, [http://www.museum.ie/Archaeology/Visit-the-Museum/Things-to-See-Do/The-Ardagh-Chalice-\(1\)](http://www.museum.ie/Archaeology/Visit-the-Museum/Things-to-See-Do/The-Ardagh-Chalice-(1)), accessed May 22 2017.





**Figure 89:** Illustration of Monymusk shrine showing the cross created by the ridgepole and escutcheons. From: Alice Blackwell, 'The Iconography of the Hunterston Brooch and Related Early Medieval Material', *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland* 141 (2011): 243.



**Figure 90:** Disc brooch. 9<sup>th</sup> century. Silver, 7.3 cm diameter. The British Museum, London. From: The British Museum, [http://www.britishmuseum.org/research/collection\\_online/collection\\_object\\_details.aspx?objectId=93777&partId=1&searchText=Anglo+saxon+brooch&object=23006&page=2](http://www.britishmuseum.org/research/collection_online/collection_object_details.aspx?objectId=93777&partId=1&searchText=Anglo+saxon+brooch&object=23006&page=2), accessed May 22 2017.



**Figure 91.A:** Portable shrine. 8<sup>th</sup> century. Copper alloy, glass, amber, leather strap, and gilding, 9.2 x 15.1 x 5.2 cm. Sens Cathedral Treasury, Sens. From: Kornbluth Photography, <http://www.kornbluthphoto.com/CarolingianMetalwork1.html>, accessed May 22 2017.



**Figure 91.B:** Portable shrine, back. From: Kornbluth Photography, <http://www.kornbluthphoto.com/CarolingianMetalwork1.html>, accessed May 22 2017.



**Figure 91.C:** Portable shrine, left side. From: Kornbluth Photography, <http://www.kornbluthphoto.com/CarolingianMetalwork1.html>, accessed May 22 2017.





**Figure 91.D:** Portable shrine, base with sliding lid. From: Kornbluth Photography, <http://www.kornbluthphoto.com/CarolingianMetalwork1.html>, accessed May 22 2017.



**Figure 91.E:** Portable shrine, interior. From: Kornbluth Photography, <http://www.kornbluthphoto.com/CarolingianMetalwork1.html>, accessed May 22 2017.



**Figure 92.A:** Enger reliquary. 8<sup>th</sup> century. Copper alloy, gold, and gemstones, 15.9 x 14.6 cm. Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Berlin. From: Kornbluth Photography, <http://www.kornbluthphoto.com/CarolingianMetalwork1.html>, accessed May 22 2017.





**Figure 92.B:** Enger reliquary, back. From: Kornbluth Photography, <http://www.kornbluthphoto.com/CarolingianMetalwork1.html>, accessed May 22 2017.



**Figure 92.C:** Enger reliquary, left side. From: Kornbluth Photography, <http://www.kornbluthphoto.com/CarolingianMetalwork1.html>, accessed May 22 2017.



**Figure 92.D:** Enger reliquary, right side. From: Kornbluth Photography, <http://www.kornbluthphoto.com/CarolingianMetalwork1.html>, accessed May 22 2017.



**Figure 92.E:** Enger reliquary, base. From: Kornbluth Photography, <http://www.kornbluthphoto.com/CarolingianMetalwork1.html>, accessed May 22 2017.





**Figure 93:** Fuller brooch. 9<sup>th</sup> century. Silver, niello, 11.4 cm diameter. The British Museum, London. From: The British Museum, [http://www.britishmuseum.org/research/collection\\_online/collection\\_object\\_details.aspx?objectId=87155&partId=1](http://www.britishmuseum.org/research/collection_online/collection_object_details.aspx?objectId=87155&partId=1), accessed May 22 2017.



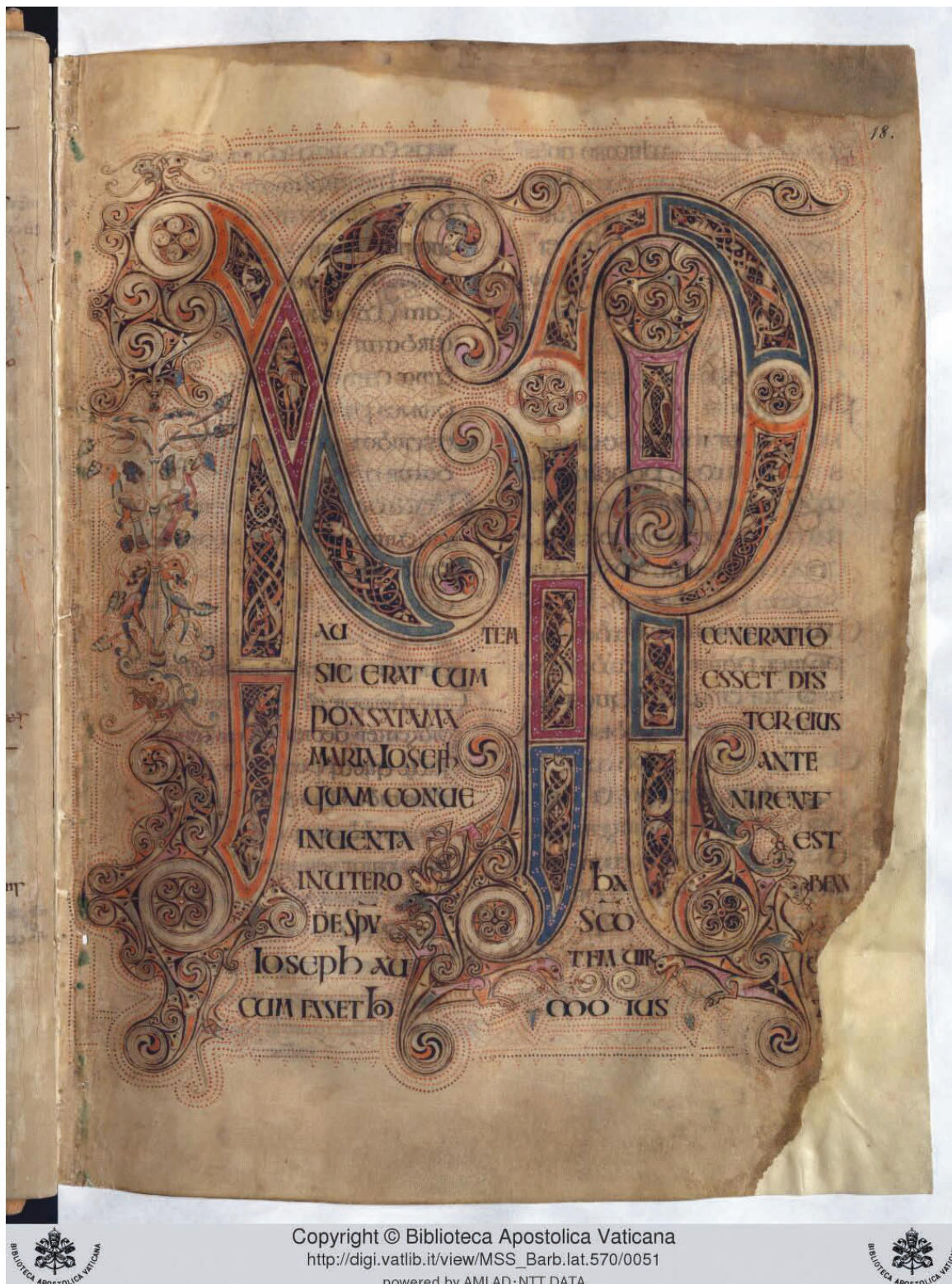
**Figure 94:** Muotathal shrine. 9<sup>th</sup> century. Copper alloy and wood. Muotathal Abbey, Muotathal. From: RDK Labor, <http://www.rdklabor.de/wiki/Datei:03-0233-1.jpg#/media/File:03-0233-1.jpg>, accessed May 22 2017.





**Figure 95:** Book of Durrow, MS 57, fol. 193r, John 1:1 (In principio). 7<sup>th</sup> century. Vellum and pigment, 24.5 x 14.5 cm. Trinity College Library, Dublin. From: Benjamin Tilghman, 'The Shape of the Word: Extralinguistic Meaning in Insular Letting', *Word & Image: A Journal of Verbal/Visual Enquiry* 27 (2011): 293.





**Figure 96:** Barberini Gospels, MS Barb. Lat. 570, fol. 18r. 8<sup>th</sup> century. Vellum and pigment, 34.0 x 25.8 cm. Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Vatican City. From: Digital Vatican Library, [http://digi.vatlib.it/view/MSS\\_Barb.lat.570](http://digi.vatlib.it/view/MSS_Barb.lat.570), accessed May 22 2017.

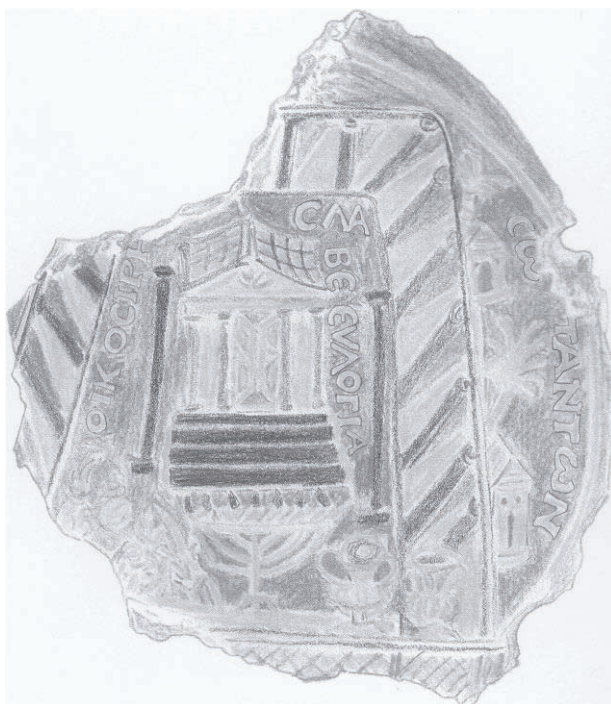


**Figure 97:** Coppergate helmet. 8<sup>th</sup> century. Iron, copper alloy, and wood, 40.0 cm height 22.0 cm internal diameter. Yorkshire Museum, York. From: History of York, <http://www.historyofyork.org.uk/themes/anglo-saxon/the-york-helmet>, accessed May 22 2017.





**Figure 98:** Bewcastle Cross, Christ panel detail. 7<sup>th</sup>–8<sup>th</sup> century. Sandstone, 4.5 m height. Bewcastle, Cumbria. From: Geograph, <http://www.geograph.org.uk/photo/1833413>, accessed May 22 2017.



**Figure 99:** Gilt glass from Catacomb of SS Marcellinus and Peter, illustration. Drawing by Honora Chapman. From: Honora Howell Chapman, 'What Josephus Sees: The Temple of Peace and the Jerusalem Temple as Spectacle in Text and Art', *Phoenix* 63 (2009): pl. 1.

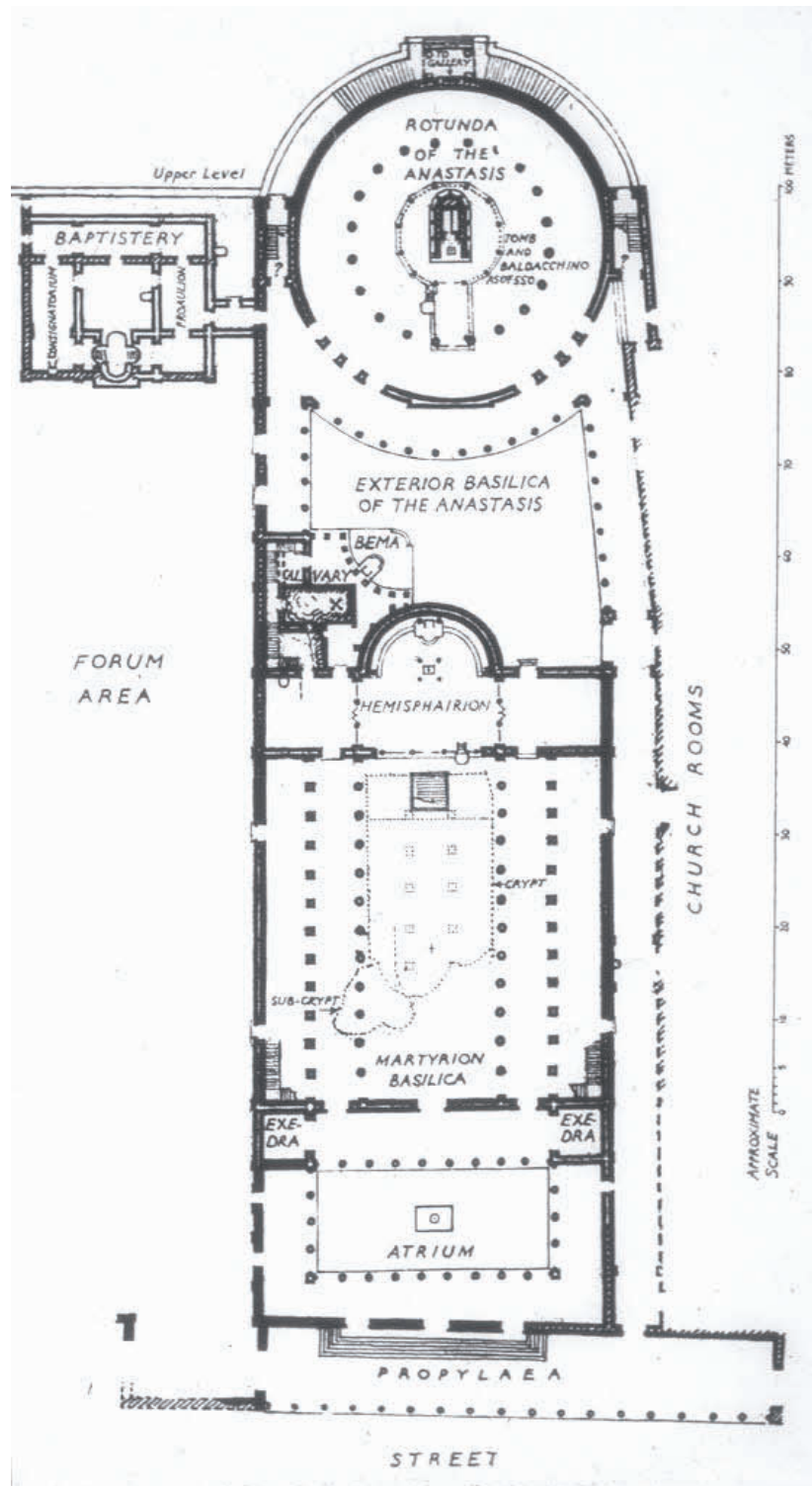


**Figure 100:** Monza/Bobbio ampulla. 6<sup>th</sup> century. Lead and tin, 7.0 cm height. Museo dell'abbazia di San Colombano, Bobbio. From: Holy Sepulchre, <http://www.holysepulchre.custodia.org/detailgallery.asp?id=11&c=9&pr=6>, Accessed June 6 2017.





**Figure 101:** Book of Kells, MS 58, fol. 2r. 9<sup>th</sup> century. Vellum and pigment, 33.0 x 25.0 cm. Trinity College Library, Dublin. From: Bernard Meehan, *The Book of Kells: An Illustrated Introduction to the Manuscript in Trinity College Dublin* (London: Thames and Hudsom, 1994), 5.

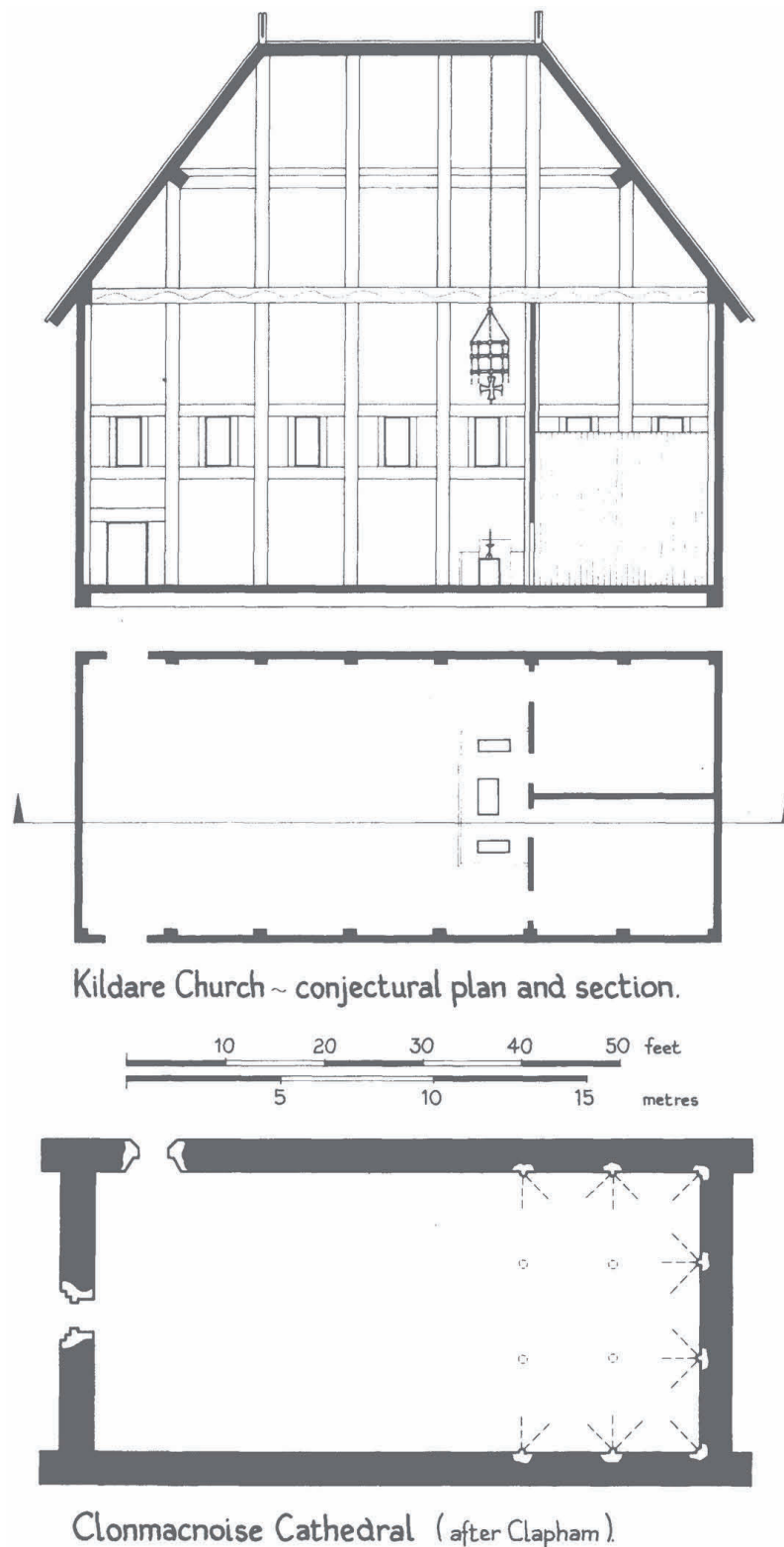


**Figure 102:** 4<sup>th</sup> century plan of the Holy Sepulchre, Jerusalem. From: Kenneth John Conant. 'The Original Buildings at the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem', *Speculum* 31, no. 1 (1956): pl. VI.





**Figure 103:** Lindisfarne Gospels, Cotton MS Nero D.IV, fol. 94v. circa 715. Vellum and pigment, 34.0 x 24.0 cm. The British Library, London. From: The British Library, <http://www.bl.uk/onlinegallery/ttp/lindisfarne/accessible/page171ge.html>, accessed June 6 2017.



**Figure 104:** Ground level plan of Clonmacnoise cathedral and conjectural plan and longitudinal section of Kildare Church. From: C. A. Raleigh Radford. 'The Earliest Irish Churches', *Ulster Journal of Archaeology* 40 (1977): 6.





**Figure 105:** Gallarus oratory. 8<sup>th</sup> century. Dingle Peninsula, Co. Kerry. From: Gallarus Oratory, <http://www.gallarusoratory.ie/>, accessed June 6 2017.

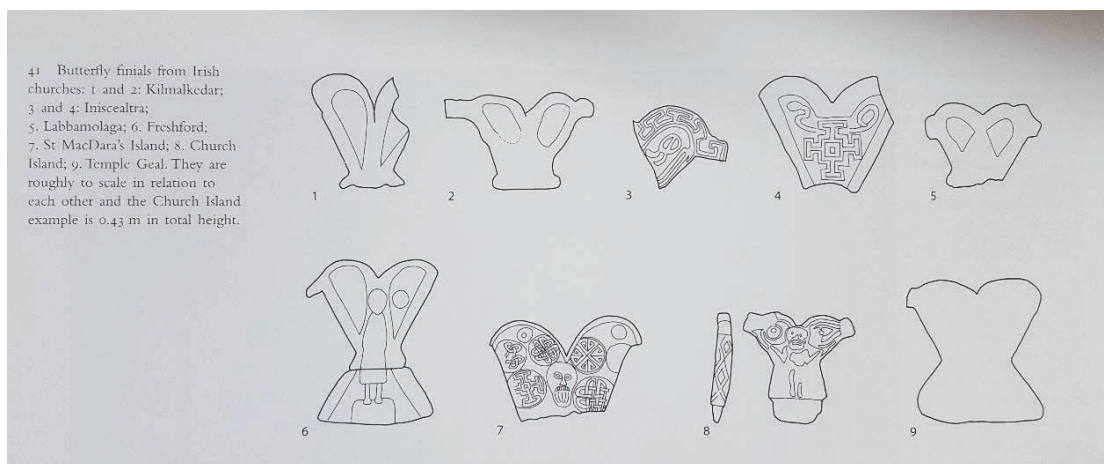


**Figure 106:** St Declan's tomb-shrine. 8<sup>th</sup> century. St Declan's Monastery, Ardmore, Co. Waterford. From: The Wild Island, <https://thewildisland.wordpress.com/>, accessed June 6 2017.





**Figure 107:** St MacDara's chapel. 10<sup>th</sup> century with 1975 restorations. St Macdara's Island, Co. Galway. From: Panoramio, <http://www.panoramio.com/photo/97354830>, Accessed June 6 2017.

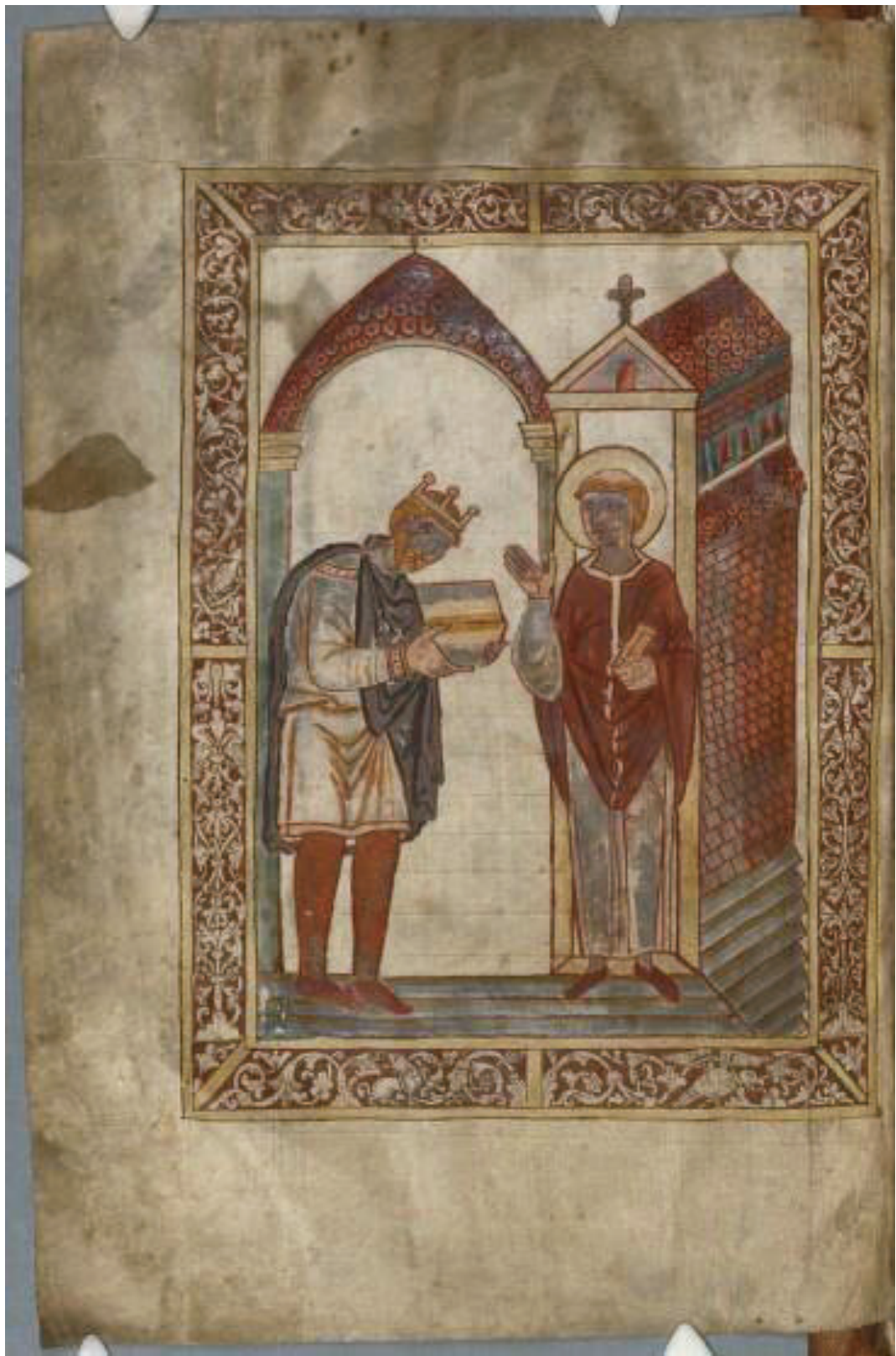


**Figure 108:** Irish church roof finials, illustrations. From: Tomás Ó Carragáin. *Churches in Early Medieval Ireland: Architecture, Ritual and Memory* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010), 42.



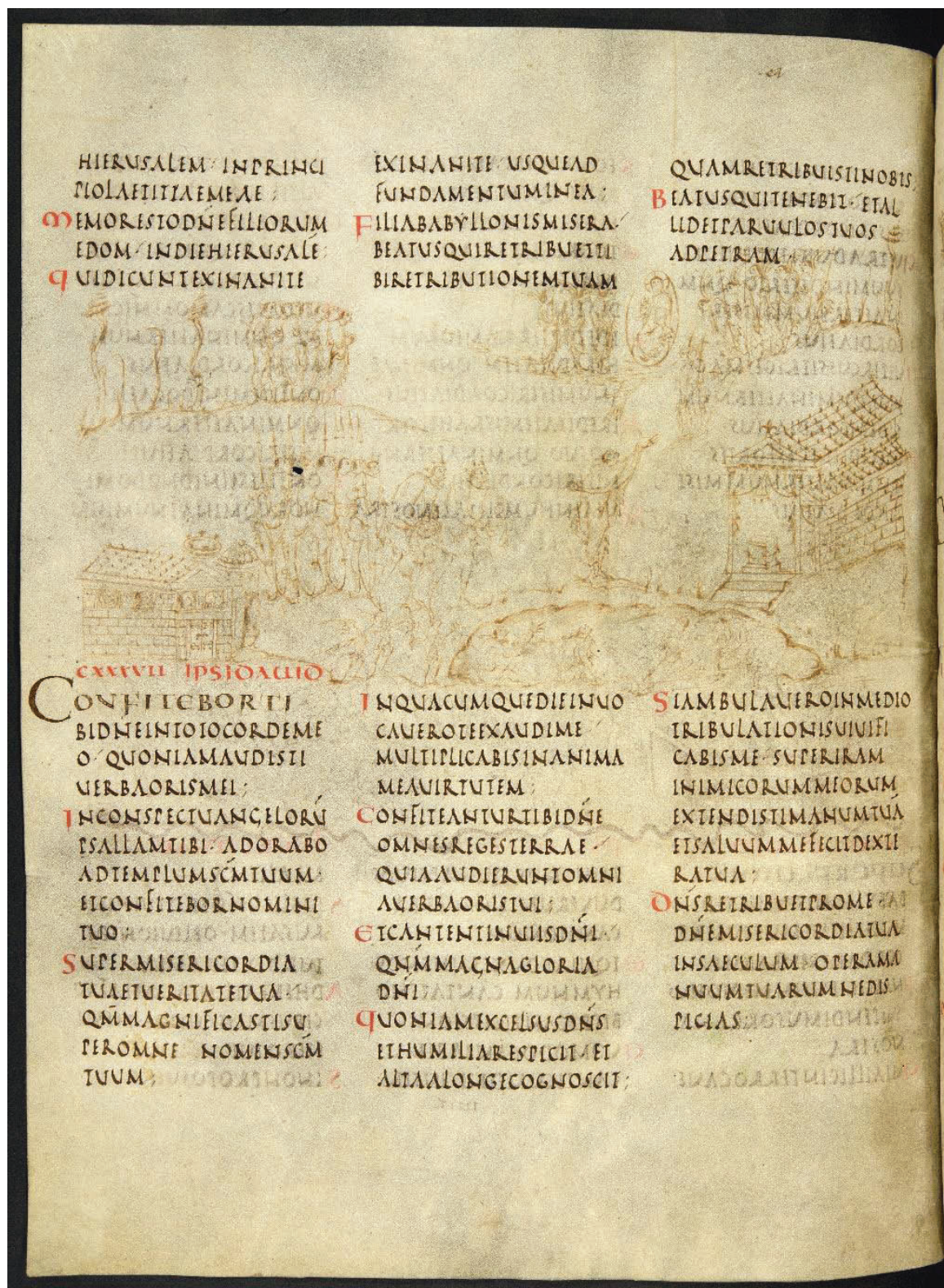


**Figure 109:** Santa Prassede apse mosaic depicting Pope Paschal I holding a miniature church. 817–24. Santa Prassede, Rome. From: Flickr, <https://www.flickr.com/photos/33563858@N00/21899948865>, Accessed June 6 2017.



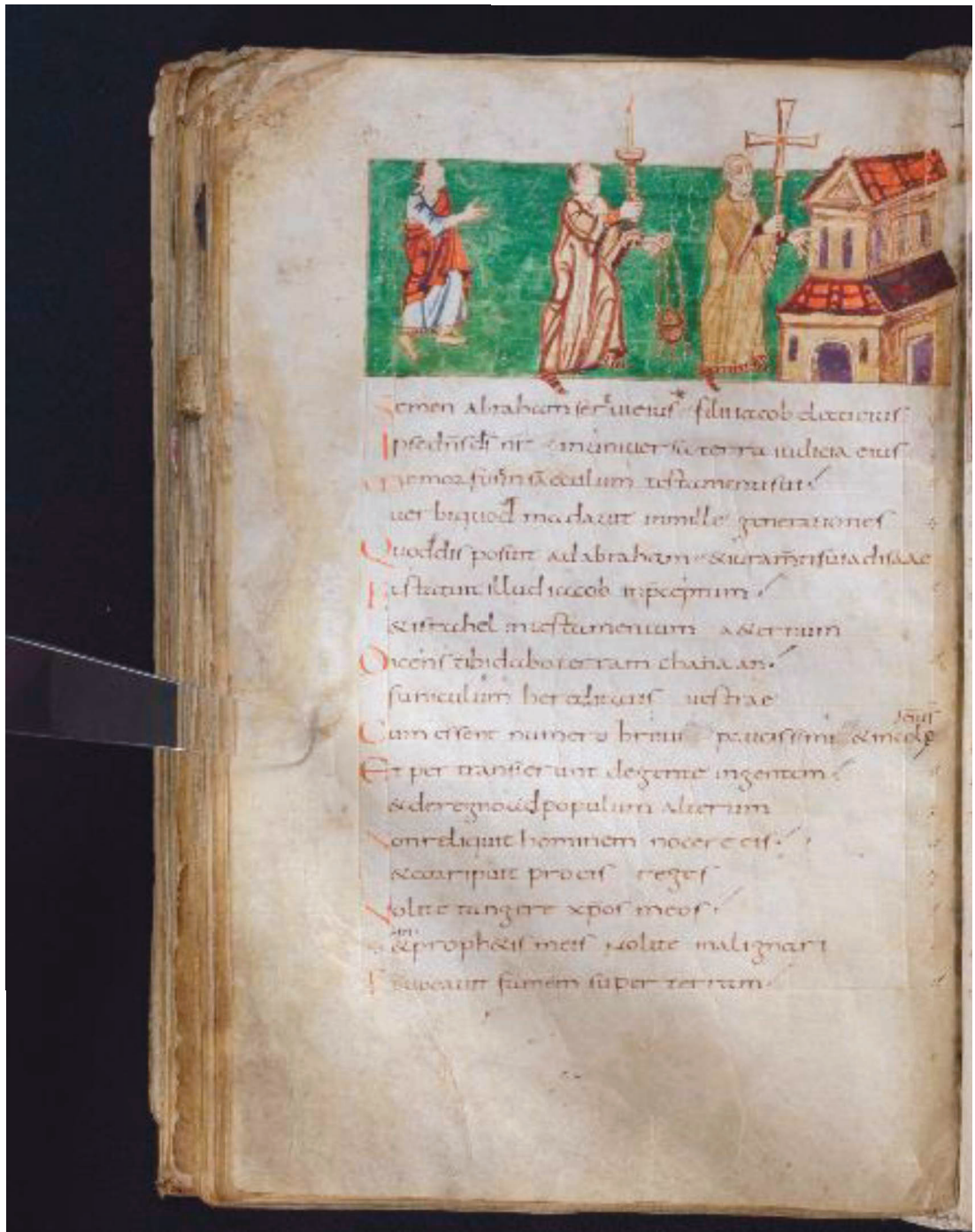
**Figure 110:** Bede the Venerable, *Two Lives of St Cuthbert*, MS 183, fol. 1v. circa 930. Vellum and pigment, 11.5 x 7.9 cm. Corpus Christi College, Cambridge. From: Stanford's Digital Manuscripts Index, [http://dms.stanford.edu/catalog/CCC183\\_keyword](http://dms.stanford.edu/catalog/CCC183_keyword), accessed June 6 2017.



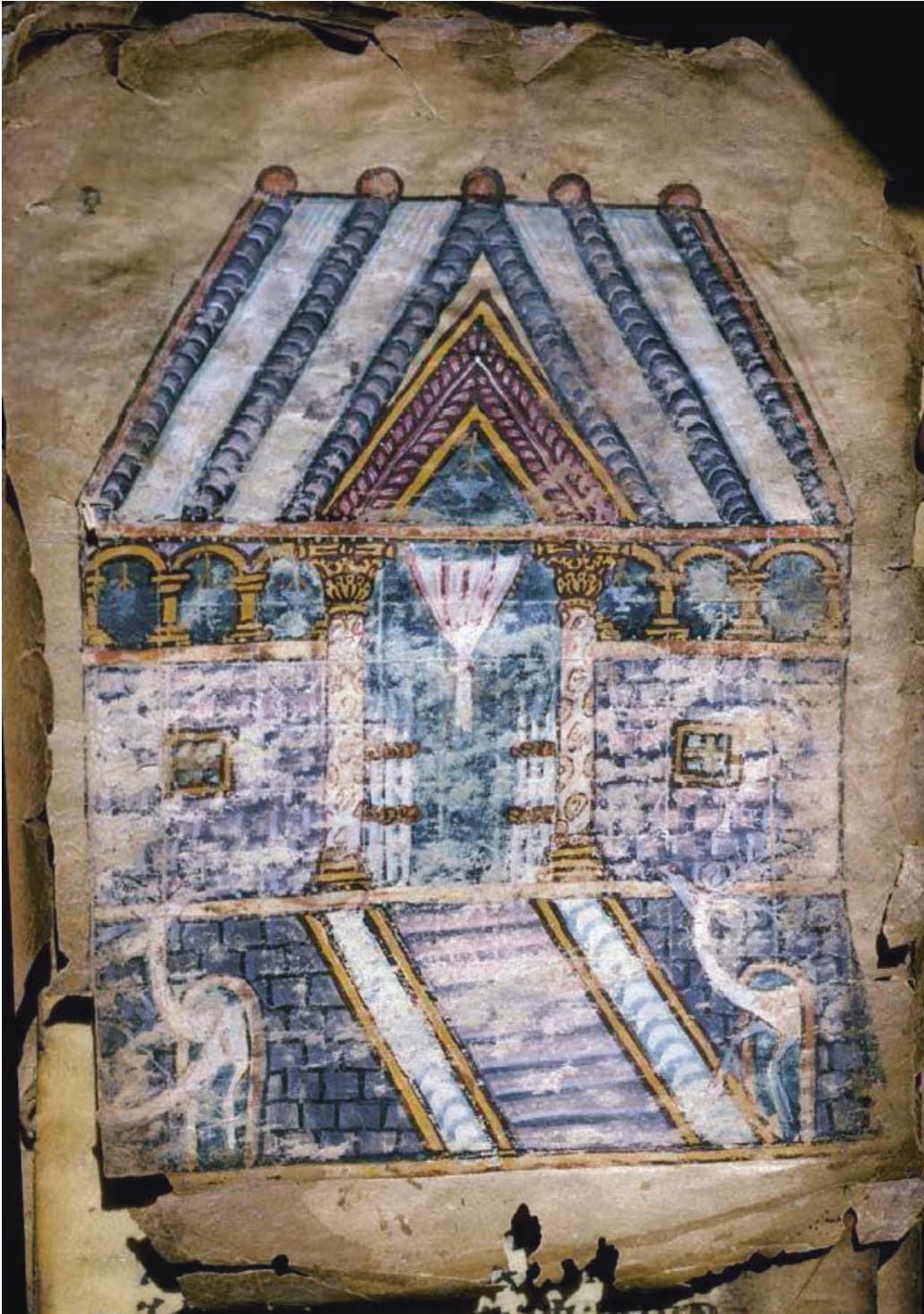


**Figure 111:** Utrecht Psalter, MS Bibl. Rhenotraiectinae I Nr 32, fol. 77v. 9<sup>th</sup> century. Vellum and pigment, 33.0 × 25.6 cm. Universiteitsbibliotheek, Utrecht. From: Universiteit Utrecht, <http://psalter.library.uu.nl/page?p=161&res=1&x=0&y=0>, accessed June 6 2017.



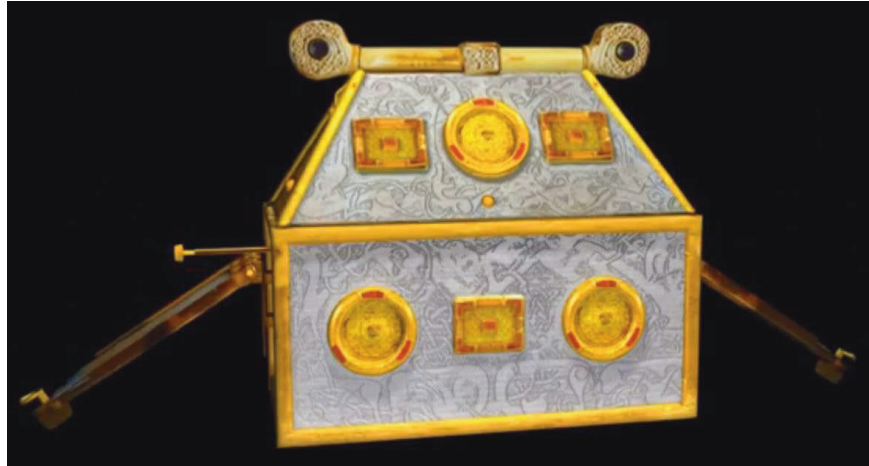


**Figure 112:** Stuttgart Psalter, Cod.Bibl.fol.23, fol. 118v. 9<sup>th</sup> century. Vellum and pigment, 26.5 x 17.5 cm. Württembergische Landesbibliothek, Stuttgart. From: Württembergische Landesbibliothek, [http://digital.wlb-stuttgart.de/sammlungen/sammlungslste/werksansicht/?id=6&tx\\_dlf%5Bid%5D=1343&tx\\_dlf%5Bpage%5D=244](http://digital.wlb-stuttgart.de/sammlungen/sammlungslste/werksansicht/?id=6&tx_dlf%5Bid%5D=1343&tx_dlf%5Bpage%5D=244), accessed June 6 2017.



**Figure 113:** Garima Gospels, MS Abba Garima II, fol. 260r, 'Temple page'. 6<sup>th</sup> century. Vellum and pigment, 22.9 x 31.4 cm. Abba Garima Monastery, Adwa. From: Marginalia, <http://marginalia.lareviewofbooks.org/discoveries-ethiopian-desert/>, accessed June 6 2017.





**Figure 114:** 3D recreation of the Monymusk shrine from the Creative Spirit (2014) special exhibit, video still (0:20). The National Museum of Scotland, Edinburgh. From: The National Museum of Scotland, <http://www.nms.ac.uk/explore/stories/scottish-history-and-archaeology/monymusk-reliquary/>, accessed June 6 2017.



**Figure 115:** Govan sarcophagus, after restoration in 1994. 9<sup>th</sup>–10<sup>th</sup> century. Sandstone, 1.86 m length. Govan Old Parish Church, Glasgow. From: Friends of Govan Old Parish Church, [https://www.govanold.org.uk/reports/1999\\_sarcophagus.html](https://www.govanold.org.uk/reports/1999_sarcophagus.html), accessed June 6 2017.



**Figure 116:** Wirksworth stone. 7<sup>th</sup> century. Stone, .91 x 1.52 m. St. Mary's Church, Wirksworth. From: Yorkshire Pudding, <http://beefgravy.blogspot.com/2015/07/wirksworth.html>, accessed June 6 2017.



**Figure 117:** St Alkmund's sarcophagus. 9<sup>th</sup> century. Stone, 1.8 m length. St Alkmund's, Derby. From: A Corner of Tenth-Century Europe, <https://tenthmedieval.wordpress.com/tag/st-alkmunds-derby/>, accessed June 6 2017.



**Figure 118:** Tomb of abbess Theodechilde. 7<sup>th</sup> century. Stone. Abbaye de Jouarre, Jouarre. From: Flickr, <https://www.flickr.com/photos/archiromane1/2065523155/>, accessed June 6 2017.

Shrines	Length	Width	Ratio
Amiata	12.1	4.87	2.48:1
Bobbio	8.7	3	2.9:1
Bologna	12	4.1	2.92:1
Brussels	10.8	0	NA
Clonard	19.2	8.4	2.28:1
Clonmore	8.2	2.7	3.03:1
Emly	10.5	4.1	2.56:1
Hokksund	?	?	NA
London	12.6	?	NA
Lough Erne (A)	17	7.8	2.18:1
Lough Erne (B)	10.6	3.2	3.21:1
Melhus	11.8	4.7	2.51:1
Moissac	13	6	2.16:1
Monymusk	11	5.4	2.03:1
Mortain	13.5	5	2.7:1
Ranvaik	13.4	5.5	2.43:1
Setnes	11.5	5	2.3:1
Shannon	11	5.5	2:1

**Figure 119:** Average length to width ratios of Insular house-shape shrines.





**Figure 120:** Hogback monument (?), VIG029. 8<sup>th</sup>–10<sup>th</sup> century. Sandstone, 149.86 cm length. St Vigean's Sculptured Stones Museum, St Vigean's. From: Jane Geddes, *St Vigean's Stones*, Historic Scotland, CD, 2009.



**Figure 121:** Recumbent shrine. 12<sup>th</sup> century. Stone, 1.0 x 1.79 x .68 m. St Tighernach, Clones, Co. Monaghan. From: Early Christian Sites in Ireland, <http://www.earlychristianireland.net/Counties/monaghan/clones/>, accessed June 6 2017.



**Figure 122:** Hedda stone. 9<sup>th</sup>–10<sup>th</sup> century. Stone, 1.0 x 0.75 x 0.35 m. The Cathedral Church of St Peter, St Paul and St Andrew, Peterborough. From: Flickr, <https://www.flickr.com/photos/hornbeam/6652031851>, accessed June 6 2017.

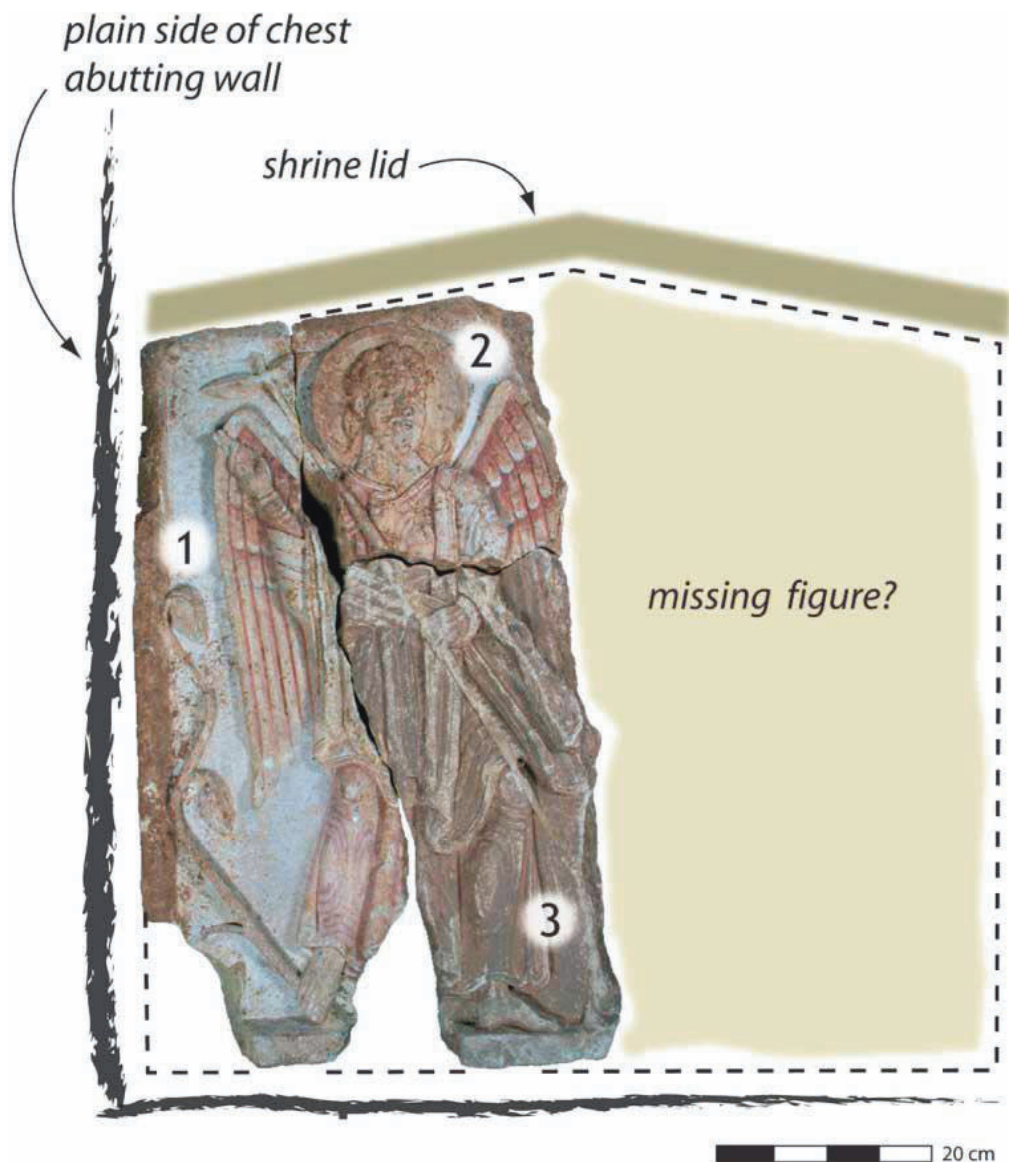


**Figure 123:** St Leonard's shrine. 8<sup>th</sup>–10<sup>th</sup> century. Sandstone, 56.0 x 114.0 cm. St Andrews Cathedral Museum, St Andrews. Photograph: Samuel Thomas Gerace III © Historic Environment Scotland.

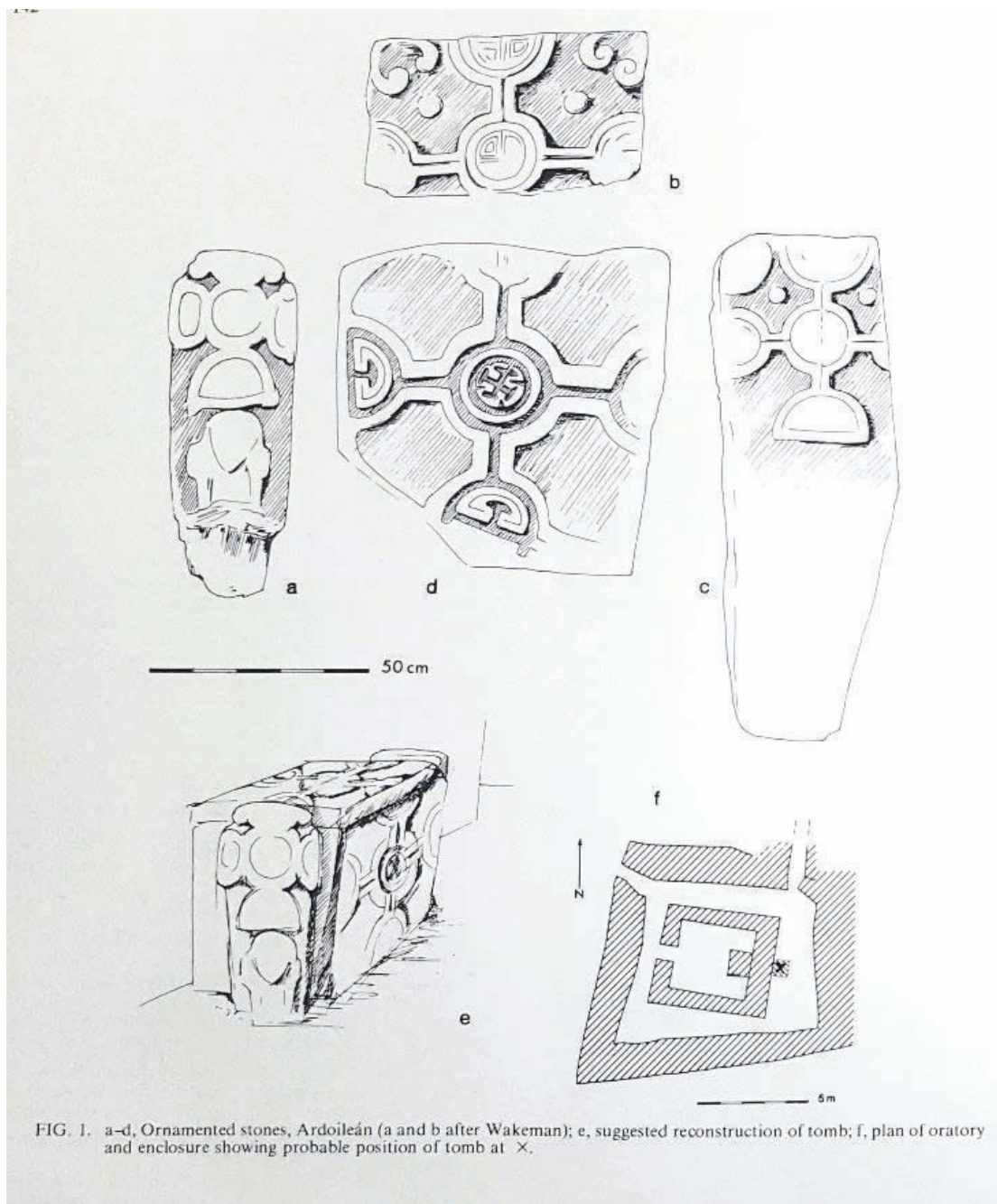




**Figure 124:** Tomb-shrine (?). Three 8<sup>th</sup>–9<sup>th</sup> century stone panel fragments; reconstruction based on Radford. Abbey Museum, Jedburgh. Photograph: Samuel Thomas Gerace III © Historic Environment Scotland.



**Figure 125:** Lichfield angel panel. 9<sup>th</sup> century. Limestone, 63.5 x 37.0 cm. Lichfield Cathedral, Lichfield. From: Angela Geary and Emily Howe, 'Three-Dimensional Documentation and Virtual Restoration of the Lichfield Angel', *Journal of the Institute of Conservation* 32, no. 2 (2009): 166.



**Figure 126:** Cross-slabs near the church of High Island (slabs 11, 13, 2, 12), Ardoileán, Co. Galway, arranged to form a tomb-shrine, illustration. From: Michael Herity, 'The Ornamented Tomb of the Saint at Ardoileán, Co. Galway', in *Ireland and Insular Art, AD 500-1200*, ed. Michael Ryan (Dublin: Royal Irish Academy, 1987), 142.





**Figure 127:** Drainie No. 18, composite shrine or altar fragments. 8<sup>th</sup> century. Stone. Kinneddar Church, Drainie. From: Canmore, <https://canmore.org.uk/site/16490/drainie>, accessed June 6 2017.



**Figure 128:** Monk Stone, composite shrine or altar panel. 8<sup>th</sup>–9<sup>th</sup> century. Sandstone. Shetland Museum, Lerwick. From: Shetland Museum Archives, <https://www.shetlandmuseumandarchives.org.uk/visit/galleries/early-people>, accessed June 6 2017.





**Figure 129:** Mortuary house constructed as a miniature church. 12<sup>th</sup> century, Saul, Co. Down. From: Lavender's Blue, <https://lvbmag.wordpress.com/2016/06/23/st-patricks-memorial-church-saul-henry-seaver/>, accessed June 16 2017.



**Figure 130:** Triangular tomb-shrine. 7<sup>th</sup>–8<sup>th</sup> century. Temple Cronan, Burren, Co. Clare. From: Saints and Stones, <http://www.saintsandstones.net/saints-cronan-tomb1.htm>, accessed June 6 2017.



**Figure 131.A:** St Manchán shrine. 12<sup>th</sup> century. Wood, copper-alloy, gilding, and enamel, 48.0 x 61.0 x 40.0 cm. Boher Catholic Church, Boher, Co. Offaly. From: Time Travel Ireland, <http://timetravelireland.blogspot.com/2016/02/st-manchans-shrine-boher-county-offaly.html>, accessed June 6 2017.



**Figure 131.B:** St Manchán shrine, back. From: Time Travel Ireland, <http://timetravelireland.blogspot.com/2016/02/st-manchans-shrine-boher-county-offaly.html>, accessed June 6 2017.





**Figure 131.C:** St Manchán shrine, left side. From: Time Travel Ireland, <http://timetravelireland.blogspot.com/2016/02/st-manchans-shrine-boher-county-offaly.html>, accessed June 6 2017.



**Figure 131.D:** St Manchán shrine, right side. From: Time Travel Ireland, <http://timetravelireland.blogspot.com/2016/02/st-manchans-shrine-boher-county-offaly.html>, accessed June 6 2017.





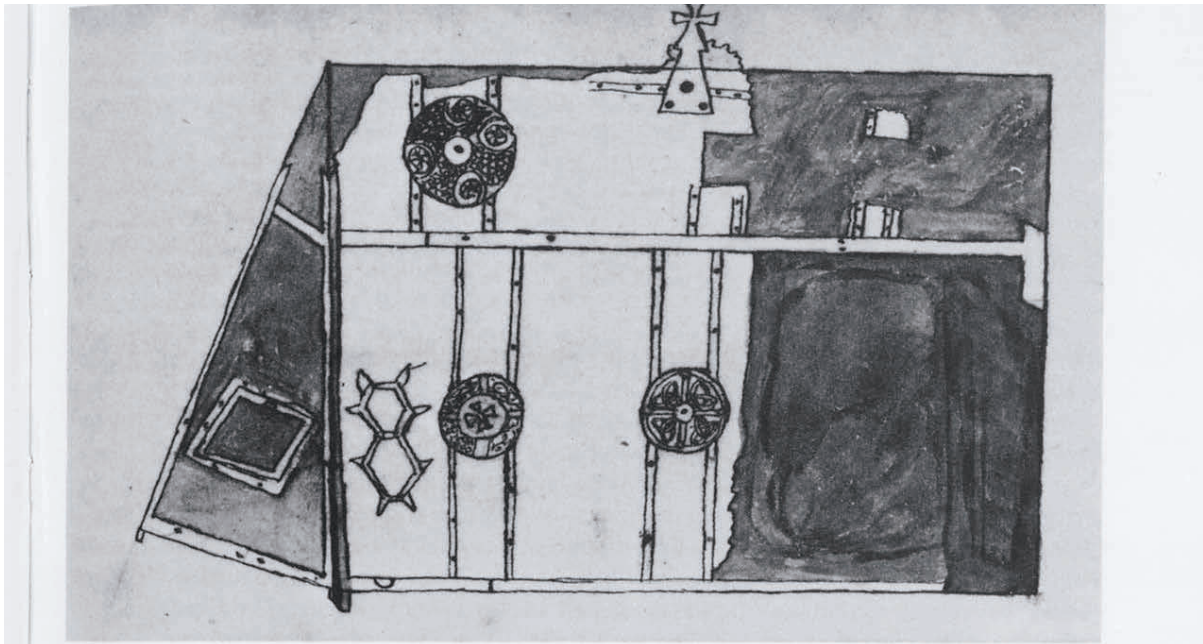
**Figure 132.A:** Shrine finials. 8<sup>th</sup> century. Copper alloy. Musée des Antiquités Nationales, Saint-Germain-en-Laye. From: John Hunt, 'On Two "D"-Shaped Bronze Object in the St. Germain Museum', *Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy* 57 (1955/1956): pl. II.



**Figure 132.B:** Shrine finials, back. From: John Hunt, 'On Two "D"-Shaped Bronze Object in the St. Germain Museum', *Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy* 57 (1955/1956): pl. II.



**Figure 133:** Triangular tomb-shrine. 7<sup>th</sup>–8<sup>th</sup> century. Killabuonia, Co. Kerry.  
From: Twitter, <https://twitter.com/yllonnocmm/status/598524156335005696>,  
accessed June 6 2017.



**Figure 134:** Drawing of the shrine for Gwenfrewi (Winefride) by Edward Lhuyd or one of his associates. Rawlinson B464, fol. 29, Bodleian Library, Oxford.  
From: Nancy and Tristan Gray Hulse Edwards, 'A Fragment of a Reliquary Casket from Gwytherin, North Wales', *The Antiquaries Journal* 72 (1992): 91.





**Figure 135:** Temple Ciarán. 8<sup>th</sup>–9<sup>th</sup> century. Clonmacnoise, Co. Offaly. From: Saints and Stones, <http://www.saintsandstones.net/saints-clonmacnoise-templeciaran1.htm>, accessed June 6 2017.



**Figure 136:** Ahenny North Cross, east face. 9<sup>th</sup> century. Sandstone, 3.13 m height. Ahenny, Co. Tipperary. From: Megalithic Ireland, <http://www.megalithicireland.com/High%20Cross%20Ahenny.htm>, accessed June 6 2017.





**Figure 137:** Opus sectile (restored 1957) on the west wall of the nave. Hagia Sophia, Istanbul. From: Hagia Sophia, <https://www.pallasweb.com/deesis/hagia-sophia-inlaid-panels.html>, accessed June 6 2017.



**Figure 138:** Pre-altar cross, repoussé canopy. Sadgeri, Georgia. From: Hilary Richardson, 'The Jewelled Cross and its Canopy', in *From the Isles of the North: Early Medieval Art in Ireland and Britain*, ed. Cormac Bourke (Belfast: HMSO, 1995), 184.



**Figure 139:** Clonmacnoise South Cross, east face. 9<sup>th</sup>–10<sup>th</sup> century. Sandstone, 2.9 m height. Clonmacnoise, Co. Offlay. From: Peter Harbison, *The High Crosses of Ireland*, vol. 2 (Bonn: Habelt, 1992), fig. 150.



**Figure 140:** Cross-shaft fragment from Aberlady, East Lothian. 7<sup>th</sup>–8<sup>th</sup> century. Sandstone, 1460 x 190 x 210 mm. The National Museum of Scotland, Edinburgh. From: The National Museum of Scotland, <http://www.nms.ac.uk/national-museum-of-scotland/>, accessed June 6 2017.



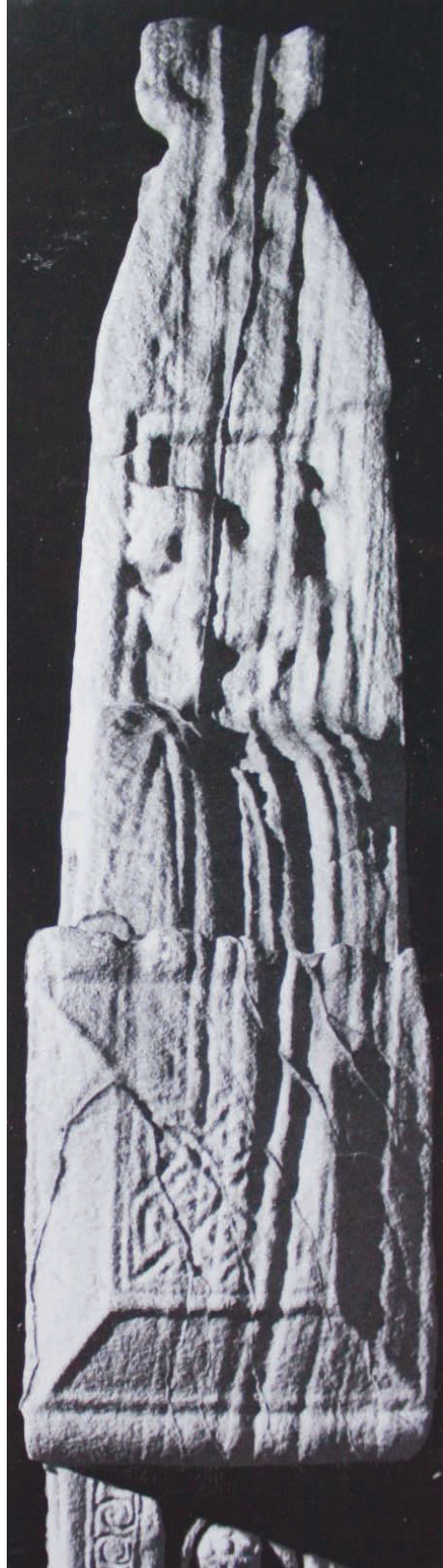


**Figure 141:** Killamery High Cross, west face. 9<sup>th</sup> century. Sandstone, 3.81 m height. Killamery, Co. Kilkenny. From: Megalithic Ireland, <http://www.megalithicireland.com/High%20Cross%20Killamery.htm>, accessed June 6 2017.



**Figure 142.A:** Durrow Cross, east face. 9<sup>th</sup>–10<sup>th</sup> century. Sandstone, 3.6 m height. Durrow, Co. Offaly. From: Peter Harbison, *The High Crosses of Ireland*, vol. 2 (Bonn: Habelt, 1992), fig. 247.





**Figure 142.B:** Durrow Cross capstone, south face. From: Peter Harbison, *The High Crosses of Ireland*, vol. 2 (Bonn: Habelt, 1992), fig. 252.



**Figure 142.C:** Durrow Cross, west face. From: Peter Harbison, *The High Crosses of Ireland*, vol. 2 (Bonn: Habelt, 1992), fig. 254.





**Figure 142.B:** Durrow Cross, north face. From: Peter Harbison, *The High Crosses of Ireland*, vol. 2 (Bonn: Habelt, 1992), fig. 257.



**Figure 143:** Termonfeckin High Cross, east face. 9<sup>th</sup>–10<sup>th</sup> century. Stone, 2.74 m height. Termonfeckin, Co. Louth. From: Megalithic Ireland, <http://www.megalithicireland.com/High%20Cross%20Termonfeckin.htm>, accessed June 6 2017.





**Figure 144.A:** Ardboe High Cross, east face. 9<sup>th</sup>–10<sup>th</sup> century. Stone, 5.6 m height. Ardboe, Co. Tyrone. From: Peter Harbison, *The High Crosses of Ireland*, vol. 2 (Bonn: Habelt, 1992), fig. 130.





**Figure 144.B:** Ardboe High Cross, south face. From: Peter Harbison, *The High Crosses of Ireland*, vol. 2 (Bonn: Habelt, 1992), fig. 33.



**Figure 145.A:** Muiredach's Cross, east face. 10<sup>th</sup> century. Sandstone, 5.5 m height. Monasterboice, Co. Louth. From: Wikimedia Commons, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Monasterboice\\_South\\_Cross\\_East\\_Face\\_2013\\_09\\_27.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Monasterboice_South_Cross_East_Face_2013_09_27.jpg), accessed June 6 2017.



**Figure 145.A:** Muiredach's Cross capstone, south face. From: Bluffton University,  
<https://www.bluffton.edu/homepages/facstaff/sullivanm/muiredach/muiredach3.html>, accessed June 6 2017.





**Figure 145.C:** Muiredach's Cross, west face. From: Wikimedia Commons, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Monasterboice\\_South\\_Cross\\_West\\_Face\\_2013\\_09\\_27.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Monasterboice_South_Cross_West_Face_2013_09_27.jpg), accessed June 6 2017.



**Figure 145.D:** Muiredach's Cross capstone, north face. From: Bluffton University, <https://www.bluffton.edu/homepages/facstaff/sullivanm/muiredach/muiredach3.html>, accessed June 6 2017.





**Figure 146.A:** Trier Apocalypse, MS 31, fol. 19v. 9<sup>th</sup> century. Vellum and pigment, 20.0 x 17.15 cm. Stadtbibliothek, Trier. From: The Index of Christian Art, <https://ica.princeton.edu/plummer/display.php?country=Germany&site=&view=country&page=1&image=186>, accessed June 7 2017.





**Figure 146.B:** Trier Apocalypse, MS 31, fol. 24r. 9<sup>th</sup> century. Vellum and pigment, 20.0 x 17.15 cm. Stadtbibliothek, Trier. From: The Index of Christian Art, <https://ica.princeton.edu/plummer/display.php?country=Germany&site=&view=country&page=1&image=190>, accessed June 7 2017.





**Figure 147.A:** Monasterboice Tall or West Cross, east face. 9<sup>th</sup>–10<sup>th</sup> century. Sandstone, 6.45 m height. Monasterboice, Co. Louth. From: Irish High Crosses, <http://highcrosses.org/monasterboice/P5080042ax.jpg>, accessed June 7 2017.





**Figure 147.B:** Monasterboice Tall or West Cross, south face. From: Peter Harbison, *The High Crosses of Ireland*, vol. 2 (Bonn: Habelt, 1992), fig. 491.



**Figure 147.C:** Monasterboice Tall or West Cross, west face. From: Peter Harbison, *The High Crosses of Ireland*, vol. 2 (Bonn: Habelt, 1992), fig. 494.





**Figure 147.D:** Monasterboice Tall or West Cross, north face detail. From: Peter Harbison, *The High Crosses of Ireland*, vol. 2 (Bonn: Habelt, 1992), fig. 497.



**Figure 148.A:** Cross of the Scriptures, east face. 10<sup>th</sup> century. Sandstone, 4 m height. Clonmacnoise, Co. Offaly. From: Peter Harbison, *The High Crosses of Ireland*, vol. 2 (Bonn: Habelt, 1992), fig. 132.





**Figure 148.B:** Cross of the Scriptures, south face. From: Peter Harbison, *The High Crosses of Ireland*, vol. 2 (Bonn: Habelt, 1992), fig. 137.



**Figure 148.C:** Cross of the Scriptures, west face. From: Peter Harbison, *The High Crosses of Ireland*, vol. 2 (Bonn: Habelt, 1992), fig. 139.



\*

**Figure 148.D:** Cross of the Scriptures, north face. From: Peter Harbison, *The High Crosses of Ireland*, vol. 2 (Bonn: Habelt, 1992), fig. 142.





**Figure 149.A:** Hoddom cross-shaft. 8<sup>th</sup>–9<sup>th</sup> century. Sandstone, 1.21 m height. The National Museum of Scotland, Edinburgh. From: Canmore, <https://canmore.org.uk/collection/382695>, accessed June 6 2017.



**Figure 149.B:** Hoddum cross-shaft, panel with trapezoidal roof with animal-head finals depicted on lowermost portion of the cross. From: Canmore, <https://canmore.org.uk/collection/382696>, accessed June 6 2017.



**Figure 150:** Hostage stone. 8<sup>th</sup>–9<sup>th</sup> century. Slate, 12.0 x 18.0 cm. Bute Museum, Rothesay. From: Buteview, <https://yarncommunity.org/stories/131>, accessed June 6 2017.



**Figure 151:** *Bringing the 'Hostage stone' to Life*, video still (0:12). The National Museum of Scotland, Edinburgh. From: Vimeo, <https://vimeo.com/74373735>, accessed June 6 2017.





**Figure 152:** Papil stone. 9–10<sup>th</sup> century. Sandstone, 214 cm length. The National Museum of Scotland, Edinburgh. From: The National Museum of Scotland, <http://www.nms.ac.uk/national-museum-of-scotland/>, accessed June 6 2017.



**Figure 153:** Book cover, detail. Evangelium Longum, Cod. Sang. 53. 9<sup>th</sup>–10<sup>th</sup> century. Ivory, 39.5 x 23.2 cm. Stiftsbibliothek, St Gall. From: E-Codices – Virtual Library of Switzerland, <http://www.e-codices.unifr.ch/de/csg/0053/bindingC/0/Sequence-260>, accessed June 7 2017.



**Figure 154:** Vita sancti Columbae, Cod. Sang. 555, fol. 166v, drawing of St Columba. 10<sup>th</sup> century. Vellum and pigment, 19.5 x 14.5 cm. Stiftsbibliothek, St Gall. From: E-Codices – Virtual Library of Switzerland, <http://www.e-codices.unifr.ch/de/csg/0555/166/0/Sequence-583>, accessed June 7 2017.





**Figure 155:** Winchester Cathedral wall painting. 11<sup>th</sup> century. Morley Library at Winchester Cathedral, Winchester. From: John Crook, 'King Edgar's Reliquary of St Swithun', *Anglo-Saxon England* 21 (1992): pl. XVII.



**Figure 156.A:** Book of Deer, MS II.6.32, fol. 1v. 10<sup>th</sup> century. Vellum and pigment, 10.7 x 5.4 cm. Cambridge University Library, Cambridge. From: University of Cambridge Digital Library, <http://cudl.lib.cam.ac.uk/view/MS-II-00006-00032/>, accessed June 7 2017.





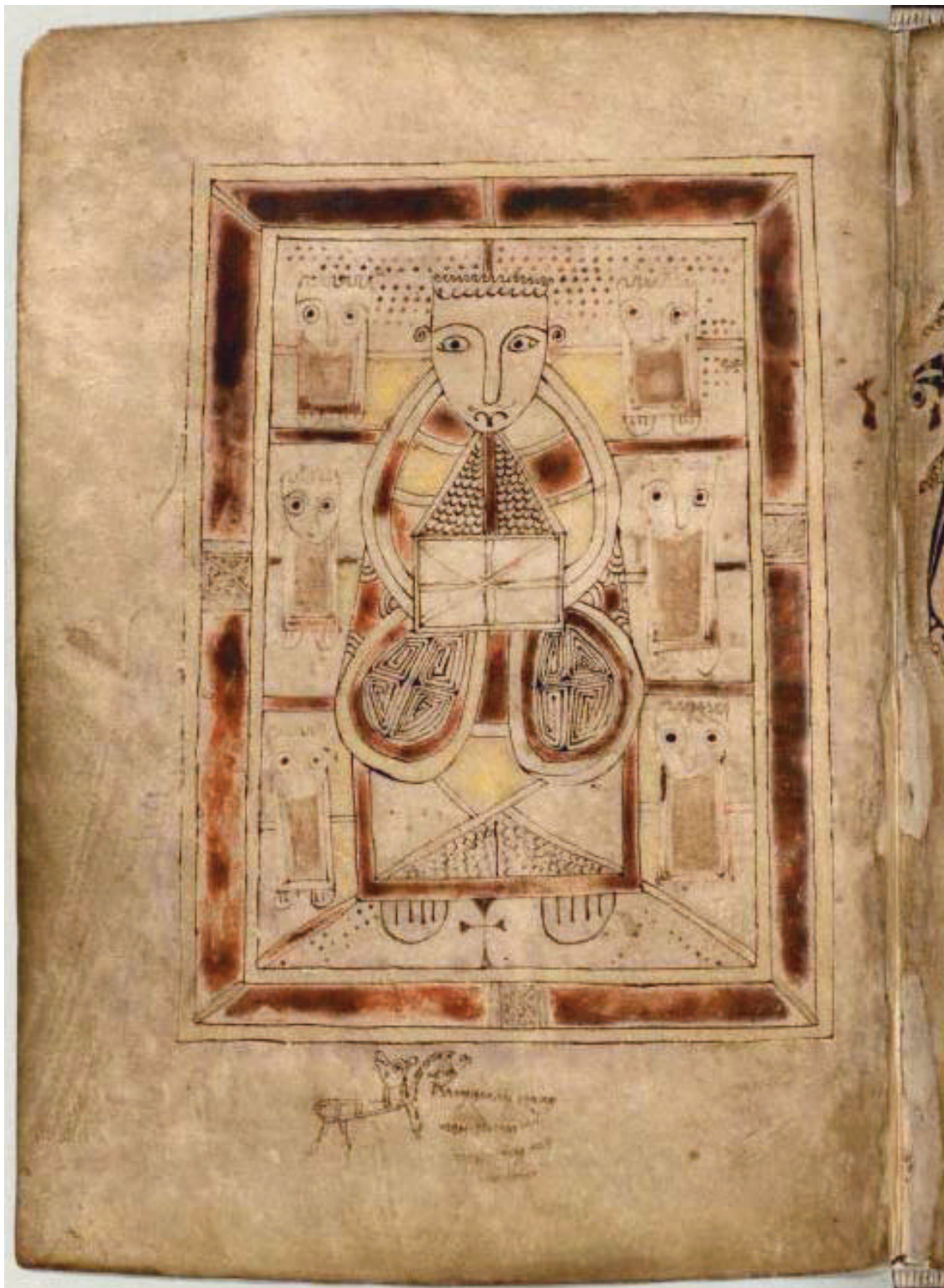
**Figure 156.B:** Book of Deer, MS li.6.32, fol. 16v. 10<sup>th</sup> century. Vellum and pigment, 10.7 x 5.4 cm. Cambridge University Library, Cambridge. From: University of Cambridge Digital Library, <http://cudl.lib.cam.ac.uk/view/MS-II-00006-00032/33>, accessed June 7 2017.





**Figure 156.C:** Book of Deer, MS II.6.32, fol. 29. 10<sup>th</sup> century. Vellum and pigment, 10.7 x 5.4 cm. Cambridge University Library, Cambridge. From: University of Cambridge Digital Library, <http://cudl.lib.cam.ac.uk/view/MS-II-00006-00032/59>, accessed June 7 2017.





**Figure 156.D:** Book of Deer, MS li.6.32, fol. 29. 10<sup>th</sup> century. Vellum and pigment, 10.7 x 5.4 cm. Cambridge University Library, Cambridge. From: University of Cambridge Digital Library, <http://cudl.lib.cam.ac.uk/view/MS-II-00006-00032/83>, accessed June 7 2017.

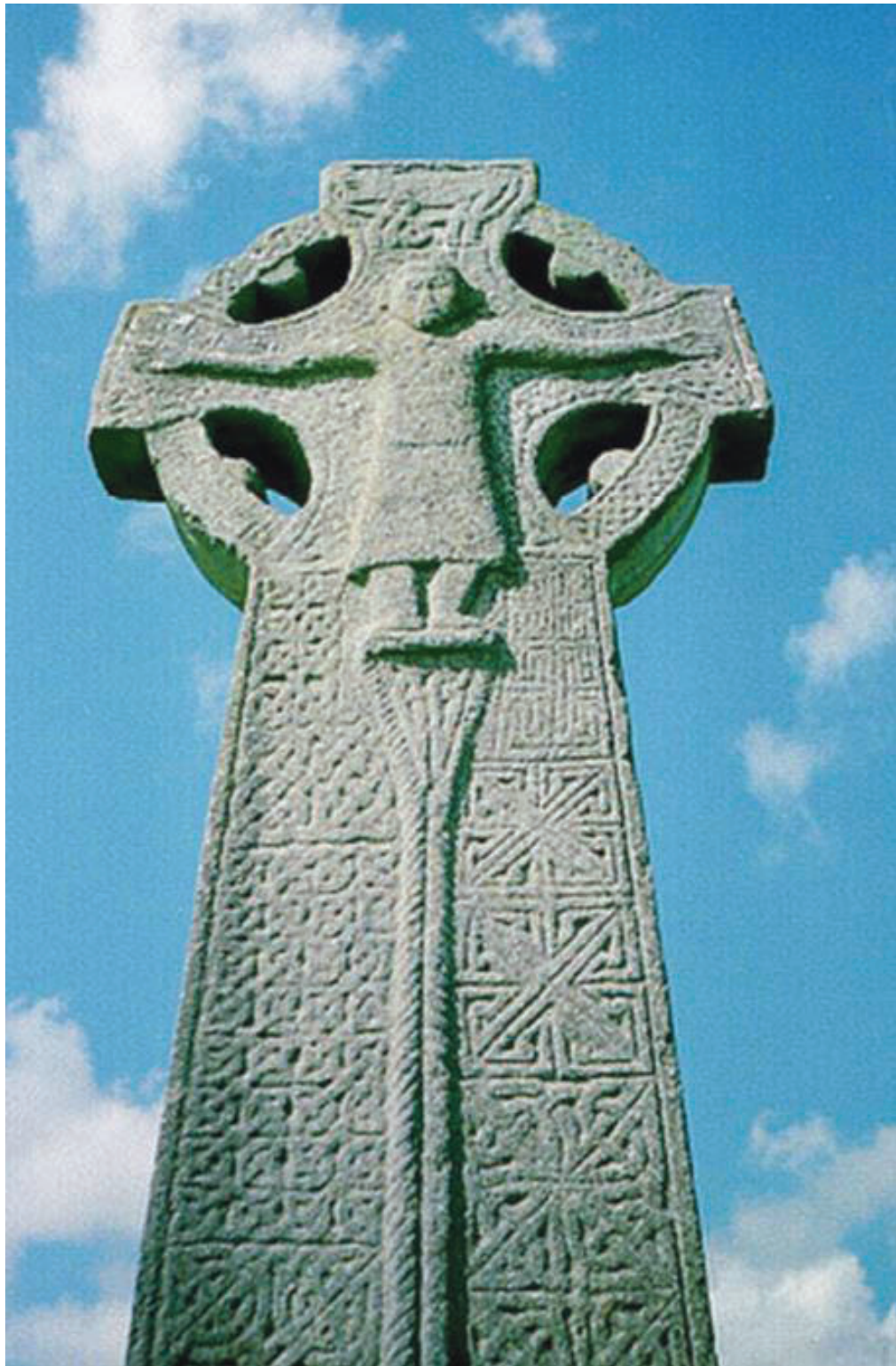


**Figure 157:** Satchel. 15<sup>th</sup> century. Leather. The National Museum of Ireland, Dublin. From: Adolf Mahr and Joseph Raftery, *Christian Art in Ancient Ireland* (New York: Hacker Art Books, 1976), pl. 64.





**Figure 158.A:** West Cross of Kilfenora, east face. 12<sup>th</sup> century. Stone, 4.6 m height. Burren, Co. Clare. From: Phylosoft, <http://travel.phylosoft.com/en/stage-8-part-1-burren-national-park/>, accessed June 7 2017.



**Figure 158.B:** West Cross of Kilfenora, detail. From: Flickr, <https://www.flickr.com/photos/catb/4274646932>, accessed June 7 2017.





**Figure 159:** North Cross at Downpatrick, detail depicting a figure holding a portable shrine. 11<sup>th</sup>– 12<sup>th</sup> century. Stone. Downpatrick, Co. Down. From: Peter Harbison, *The High Crosses of Ireland*, vol. 2 (Bonn: Habelt, 1992), fig. 205.





**Figure 160.A:** Butterfly terminal. 8<sup>th</sup>–10<sup>th</sup> century. Copper alloy and enamel, 5.3 cm height. The National Museum of Ireland, Dublin. Photograph: Samuel Thomas Gerace III © The National Museum of Ireland.



**Figure 160.A:** Butterfly terminal, back. Photograph: Samuel Thomas Gerace III © The National Museum of Ireland.



**Figure 161:** St Vigean cross-slab, VIG007. 8<sup>th</sup>–10<sup>th</sup> century. Sandstone, 1.68 x .91 m. St Vigean Sculptured Stones Museum, St Vigean. From: Jane Geddes, *St Vigean Stones*, Historic Scotland, CD, 2009.



**Figure 162:** Stonegrave cross. 10<sup>th</sup> century. Stone. Holy Trinity, Stonegrave.  
From: Saxon Churches of Yorkshire,  
<http://myweb.tiscali.co.uk/stellafisher/SaxonChurches/Stonegrave.html>, accessed  
June 7 2017.





**Figure 163:** Ardchattan cross-slab. 8<sup>th</sup>–10<sup>th</sup> century. Sandstone, 1.98 m height. Ardchattan, Loch Etive. From: Canmore, <https://canmore.org.uk/collection/413733>, accessed June 7 2017.





**Figure 164:** Camus cross. 9<sup>th</sup> century. Sandstone, 2.0 m height. Cuarnoustie, Angus. From: Wikimedia Commons, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Camus\\_cross.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Camus_cross.jpg), accessed June 7 2017.



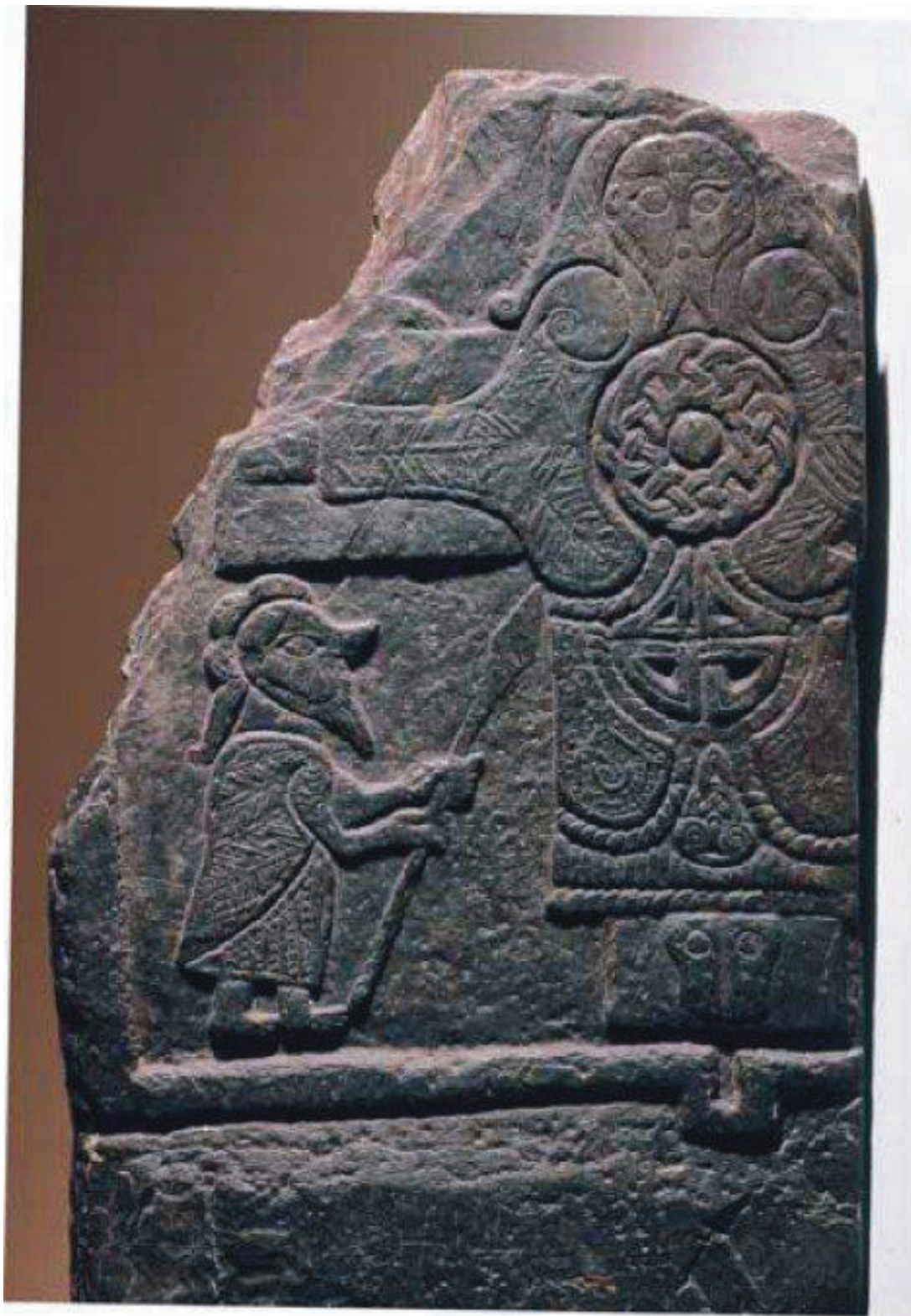


**Figure 165:** Elgin cross-slab. 8<sup>th</sup>–9<sup>th</sup> century. Stone. Elgin Cathedral, Moray.  
From: Canmore, <https://canmore.org.uk/collection/1235494>, accessed June 7 2017.





**Figure 166:** Carndonagh south pillar. 8<sup>th</sup> century. Stone, 83 cm height. Carndonagh, Co. Donegal. From: Irish Megaliths, <http://www.irishmegaliths.org.uk/crosspillars3.htm>, accessed June 7 2017.



**Figure 167:** Fragment depicting the Crucifixion, detail. 8<sup>th</sup>–10<sup>th</sup> century. Stone, 65.3 x 24.8 cm. Calf of Man. From: The Isle of Man Government, <https://www.gov.im/Image.gov?id=4259>, accessed June 7 2017.





**Figure 168:** Crucifixion panel from St John's Rinnegan, Co. Roscommon. 8<sup>th</sup>–9<sup>th</sup> century. Copper alloy, 21.1 cm height 13.9 cm length. The National Museum of Ireland, Dublin. From: The British Museum, [http://www.britishmuseum.org/whats\\_on/exhibitions/celts/highlight\\_objects.aspx#4](http://www.britishmuseum.org/whats_on/exhibitions/celts/highlight_objects.aspx#4), accessed June 7 2017.



**Figure 169:** Codex Amiatinus, MS Amiatino 1, fols. 2v-3. 679–716. Vellum and pigment, 68.0 x 50.5 cm (both pages). Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana, Florence. From: History Today, <http://www.historytoday.com/conor-o%E2%80%99brien/codex-amiatinus-britains-lost-treasure>, accessed June 7 2017.





**Figure 170:** St Albans Psalter, fol. 35v, 'Second Temptation'. 1120–45. Vellum and pigment, 27.6 x 18.4 cm. St Godehard, Dombibliothek, Hildesheim. From: The University of Aberdeen, <https://www.abdn.ac.uk/stalbanspsalter/english/commentary/page034.shtml>, accessed June 7 2017.



**Figure 171:** TCD MS 117 (E.I.40), fol. 55r, detail. 12<sup>th</sup> century. Vellum and pigment. Trinity College Library, Dublin. From: Nigel John Morgan. *Early Gothic Manuscripts: 1190-1250*, vol. 1, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982), fig. 282.





**Figure 172:** Angel mount. 8<sup>th</sup>–9<sup>th</sup> century. Copper alloy and gilding, 6.5 x 2.8 cm. Universitetets Oldsaksamling, Oslo. From: *'The Work of Angels' Masterpieces of Celtic Metalwork, 6th-9th centuries A.D.*, ed. Susan Youngs (London: The British Museum, 1989), 142.



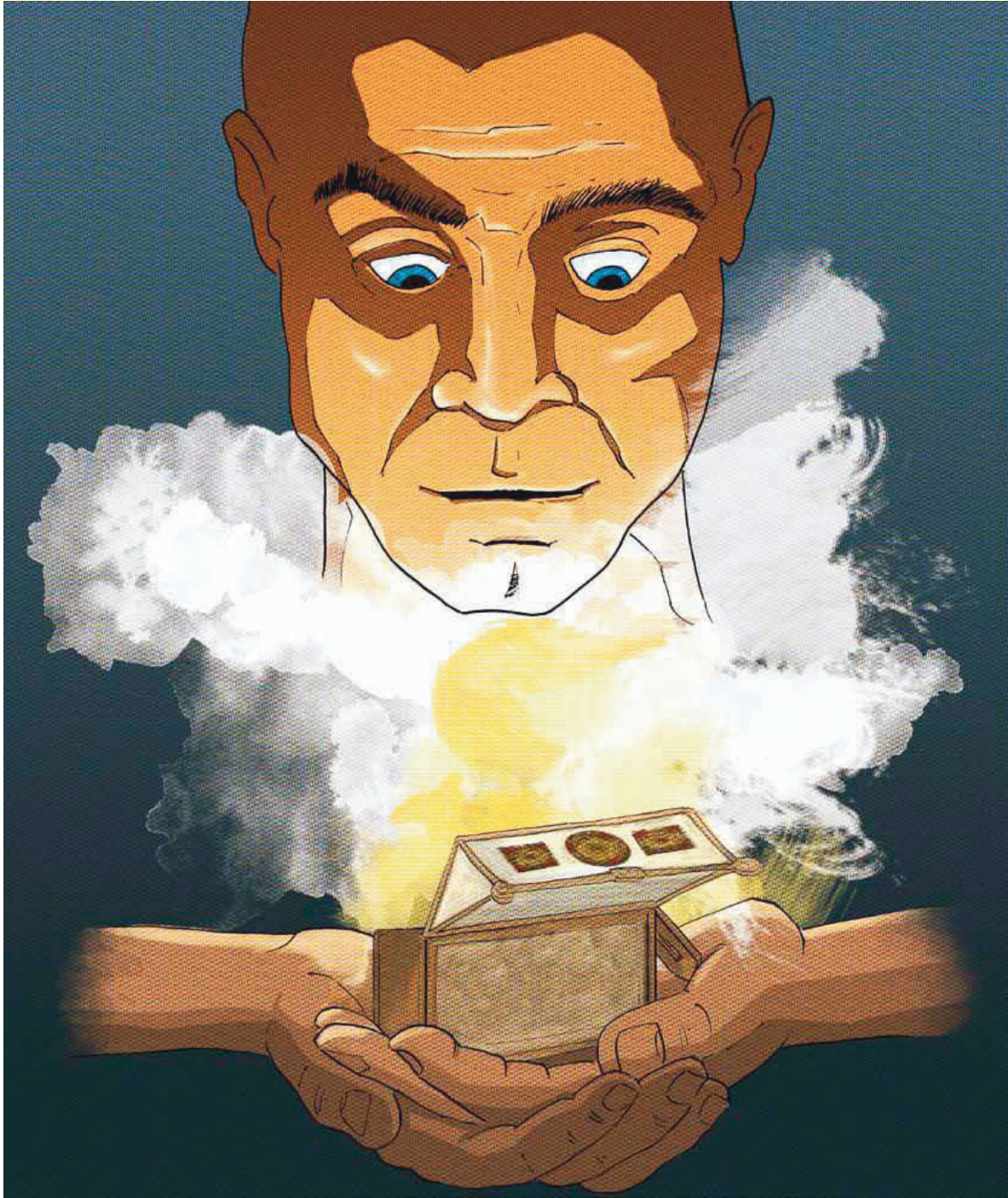
**Figure 173:** DruidCraft Tarot, Four of Pentacles by Philip and Stephanie Carr-Gomm and Will Worthington. 2005. From: Elementos do Tarot, <http://alextarologo.blogspot.com/2010/03/carta-do-dia-4-de-ouros.html>, Accessed June 7 2017.





**Figure 174:** I Tarocchi Celtici, Il re Conchobar mac Nessa con i suoi guerrieri by Giacinto Gaudenzi and Saverio Tenuta. 2000. From: Bifröst, <http://bifrost.it/CELT/Museo/Gaudenzi.html#Conchobar>, accessed June 7 2017.






**Figure 175:** Illustration of the Monymusk Shrine by Sha Nazir. 2015. From: James Crawford, *Telling Scotland's Story* (Edinburgh: ScARF, 2015), 14.

## Appendix II: Catalogue

### Amiata shrine

Common Names	Present Location
Amiata shrine, San Salvatore reliquary	Museo dell'Abbazia di San Salvatore
	
Description	
<p>The Amiata shrine is a wooden box carved from a single block of yew wood with a hinged, trapezoidal roof that is attached by two semi-oval hinges located on the back of the shrine. The Amiata shrine is not covered with metal sheets but rather exposes the wood of the box and lid. On the face of the lid and roof, a series of inlaid tinned-lead bands form a grid. Three round escutcheons have been attached above this lead grid. Two of these escutcheons have been placed on the front of the box, and one has been positioned on the front lid, forming a triangle. The roof was further constructed with a ridgepole that ends in zoomorphic terminals with garnet inlays, which act as the eyes of the beasts. Only the left suspension strap remains. Semi-tubular mouldings have been riveted around the edges of the shrine. The sides and back of the shrine are</p>	

without embellishments. On the left end, the pin-lock hole is visible near the top right corner.

The grid pattern is symmetrical, and the lead rods have been laid out in a manner that shapes to the structure of the box, i.e. the lid is trapezoidal while the base is rectangular. A square form appears where the lead beams intersect, creating a small cross. The squares are crisp and angular and are wider than the rods, suggesting that the cross shapes were an intentional aspect of the grid's design rather than a by-product of layering the rods. Finally, tinned lead is used to frame the cross-pattern design, leaving a small area of bare wood near the copper-alloy frame.

The three round escutcheons are of all the same design, likely cast from the same model. They are all composed of copper alloy and constructed with a dish setting and pronounced rims. Each escutcheon is attached to the box by a perforated lug located on its back. The ornamentation of the escutcheon is confined to the dish of the medallion. Gilt chip-carved interlace surrounds a raised setting at the centre of the escutcheon, which holds a piece of red glass.


The ridgepole is a cast copper-alloy beam with animal head terminals. The animal heads face inward and are constructed with long curling snouts. The lower lines of the snouts or mouths continue along the ridgepole and form a chain that then becomes a line that demarcates the top of the beast's 'body'. These lines follow along the edge of the ridgepole and meet at its centre to form an upward-pointing knot. Another line has been incised into the beam and forms the bottom of the beasts' bodies. Red garnets with gold backings were placed into small recesses that form the round eyes of the beasts. Originally both the front and back of the ridgepole would have held these garnet settings, but only those on the front remain.

The suspension strap is constructed from copper alloy. The surface of the suspension strap is flat and devoid of further ornamentation. Only the left suspension strap survives.



Dimensions	Materials
Height 7.5 cm, Length 12.1 cm Width 4.87 cm	Copper alloy, gilding, enamel, glass, tinning, wood, lead, garnet
Select Bibliography	
(Blindheim 1984, 47-8, Mancinelli 1975, 251-8, Ryan 1998, 1989, 134)	

## Bobbio shrine


Common Names	Present Location
Bobbio shrine, reliquary, or chrismal	Museo della città di Bobbio
	
Description	
<p>Seven tinned copper-alloy panels were found inside a wooden box in Bobbio, Italy in 1910. The shrine has since undergone conservation and the panels have been reattached to one another. The hip-roof lid is composed of separate tinned copper-alloy panels. The gable panels of the roof are missing. The lid is attached to the lower portion of the shrine using a piano hinge, which follows along the length of the back plate. The sides of the lid and box are concave. The shrine panels were originally soldered together.</p> <p>The left box endplate features a tinned copper-alloy tab that has been secured in place to the upper half of the plate using three copper-alloy rivets. This arrangement of three rivets in a triangle is also found on the right endplate, although in this instance the tab is missing. These endplate additions would</p>	

have allowed the shrine to be attached to a chain. Another feature of the left box endplate is a circular perforation in the upper right corner, which marks the location where a pin was once used to lock the shrine.

Only the front panels of the shrine have been decorated. The lid and box panels exhibit similar patterns and placements of capsules. Curvilinear ornamentation was engraved around a central capsule by free hand on both the front box and roof plates. The ornamentation that surrounds the central capsules is composed of four textured S-scrolls, which terminate in incised trumpet patterns. Within the incised lines of the trumpet motifs are the remnants of a greenish-yellow compound, possibly degraded red enamel, which was first noticed by Conor Newman in 2013. There are curvilinear incised lines within the interior surface of the S-scroll forms. The decoration of the panel is outlined by another incised line, which has been bordered by small dots. The overall effect of the ornamentation focuses the viewer's attention to the centrally placed capsules. A piece of polished rock crystal was then placed in these capsules, however, only the bottom panel's rock crystal survives. The capsule was attached to the base plate through an application of lead.

Dimensions	Materials
Height 7.0 cm Length 8.7 cm Width 3.0 cm	Copper alloy, rock crystal, enamel (?), tinning
Select Bibliography	
(Bourke 1991, 105-6, 1994/5, 287-99, 2001, 6-7, Ó Floinn 1989/1990, 54, Ryan 1990, 102-11, Tosi 1983, 82-3)	

## Bologna shrine

Common Names	Present Location
Bologna shrine or reliquary	Museo Civico Medievale, Bologna
	
Description	
<p>The Bologna shrine is composed completely of cast copper-alloy panels that are riveted together and secured by a cast frame. The hip-roof lid is attached via two hinges located on the back of the shrine. The corners of the mouldings on the front of the shrine feature incised L-patterned interlace. The ridgepole is constructed in three parts: the beam itself and the two separate animal head terminals. The beam has been soldered onto the roof while the terminals have been soldered onto both the beam and the roof. The sides of the box and the gables of the roof are all concave, much like the Ranvaik shrine. The front of the box and lid are decorated with three escutcheons each that alternate between circular and rectangular shapes. The back of the shrine also features three circular escutcheons that together form a triangle. On the left endplate, in the</p>	

upper right corner, the entrance hole of for the locking pin is visible. Both of the suspension straps survive.

The face of the lid and box are constructed from cast copper-alloy panels decorated with chip-carved interlace. The panels were once entirely gilt. The interlace on the panels closely follows the outline of the escutcheons. The pattern of escutcheons on the lid is as follows: one circular, one rectangular, and one circular escutcheon. The left and centre escutcheon still retain pieces of dark red or purple glass. The border of the circular escutcheons is composed of an outer ring of hatching and an inner ring of interlace. The rectangular escutcheons are decorated with two motifs: hatching along the exterior border and *kymatia* on the interior. The box's front plates use the same motifs and forms, only changing the pattern of the escutcheons to a rectangular, circular, and rectangular mount. All the escutcheons have been soldered onto the panels.

The ridgepole was constructed with three separate components. The terminals, which feature zoomorphic interlace, were cast separately. The beasts are snake-like, composed of a thin body that curls in an S-scroll pattern. The beasts face inward, and their mouths are open. Large settings of red enamel are used to mark their eyes; the left beast's 'eye' has been badly damaged. The beam of the ridgepole was constructed with two large, rectangular sections of chip-carved interlace which flank a small house-shaped shrine decoration that rises out of the centre of the ridgepole. There are traces of gilding on the interlace of the ridgepole. The back of the ridgepole is flat and has been decorated with incised interlace. Rather than repeating the interlace found on the face of the miniature shrine form, a four-petal cross was incised instead.

The plate on the back lid and box of the shrine are constructed from copper alloy and are incised with pointillé and ribbon interlace. Traces of gilding remain on the back of the shrine while the presence of silver coloured portions suggest that tinning was used as well. The back escutcheons are composed of two parts: an outer ring and an inner medallion soldered onto the plate. The rings are decorated with red enamel interlace while the decoration on the

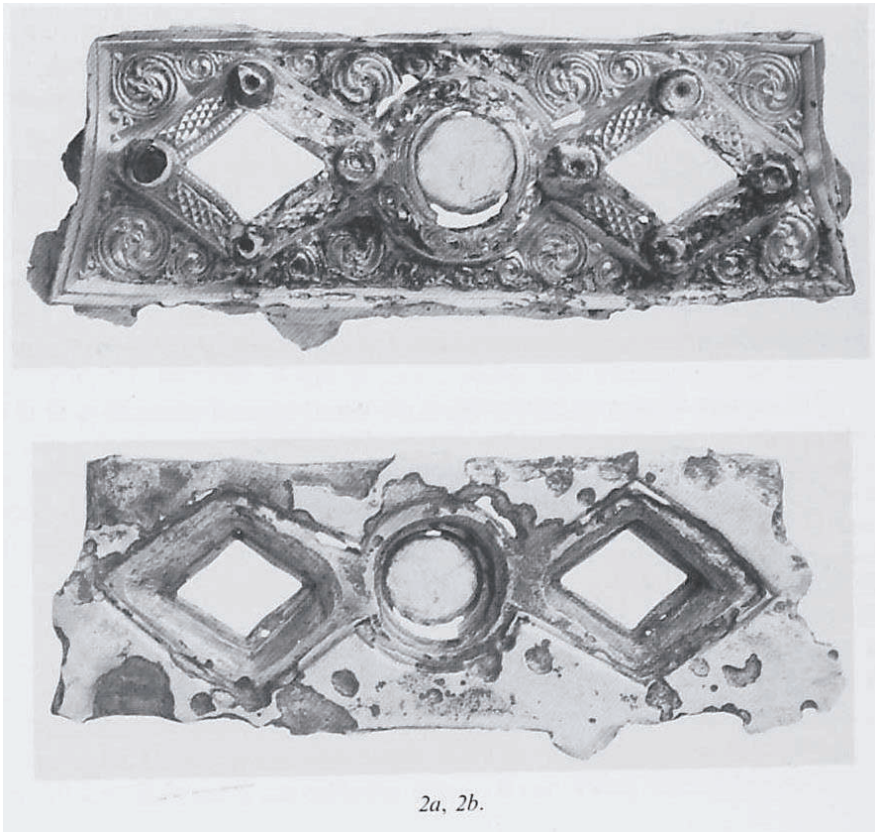
medallions consists of a single triskelion. Both endplates of the shrine feature a similar use of incised interlace, gilding, and tinning.

Both suspension straps consist of two parts: a small D-shaped mount riveted to the endplates and a hinged upper portion. The lower D-shaped segments are cast in copper alloy and feature an addition trefoil pattern that has been filled with red enamel. The upper segments are rectangular and have a rectangular opening bordered by chip-carved interlace. An animal head can be seen on the top of the suspension strap. Only the faces of the beasts' heads are rendered, with the suspension strap ending at their snouts. Surrounding these beast heads are three circular settings filled with rock crystal and glass. The interlace on the suspension strap also shows signs of gilding.

Dimensions	Materials
Height 11.0 cm Length 12.0 cm Width 4.1 cm  Length of Chain 32 cm	Copper alloy, gilding, tinning, enamel, glass
Select Bibliography	
(Blindheim 1984, 225, 2013, Henderson 1993, 216-8, Wamers 2000, 78-82, 1989, 139-40, Soderberg 1993)	




## Brussels shrine

Common Names	Present Location
None	Cinquantenaire Museum, Brussels
 <p>2a, 2b.</p>	
Description	
<p>The Brussels shrine consists of only a small portion of an Insular house-shaped shrine. In 1946 or 1947 L. Lavens presented the Royal Museums of Art and History, Brussels with a bronze plate. However, subsequent enquiries after Ryan's examination of the shrine in 1984 could not locate the present location of the object.</p> <p>As per Michael Ryan's discussion of the shrine fragment, it was constructed as a solid cast piece of copper alloy. The shape of the panel is trapezoidal, and the sides are concave. Ryan further notes that the edges of the panel are irregular and 'somewhat ragged'.</p>	

The lid has suffered damage from erosion, although some elements of the ornamentation can be ascertained. The overall decorative motifs include two lozenge-shaped mounts that flank a boss in the middle of the panel. The central boss consists of a blue glass stud surrounded by a decorative frame. The two lozenge-shaped mounts are missing their settings. Interlacing can still be seen along the flat bands of the mounts. The surface of the panel is further decorated with spirals that flow out from the ends of scrolls. Petal motifs can also be seen in the centre of these spirals. At the corners of these lozenge mounts are cylindrical settings that once held glass or gems; a piece of blue glass survives in the leftmost setting.

Dimensions	Materials
Height 3.8 cm Length 10.8 cm	Copper alloy, gilding, glass
Select Bibliography	
(Ryan 1985)	

**Clonard shrine**

Common Names	Present Location
Clonard shrine	The National Museum of Ireland, Dublin
	
Description	
<p>In the late 1980s and early 1990s, Ó Floinn, drawing on the catalogues of Mahr, Raftery, and Wilde, gathered the previously separated pieces of the Clonard shrine together. While the Clonard shrine is one of the more fragmented of the currently known Insular house-shaped shrines, the proportions exhibited by the two surviving panels indicate that it would have been the largest shrine of the group. The surviving elements of this shrine consist of two plates: a large cast circular escutcheon and a hinged suspension strap, each constructed from copper alloy.</p> <p>The shrine plates would have originally been nailed onto a wooden box. Small holes appear on the edges of the panel. The plates were tinned, and there does not appear to be signs of gilding. Four rectangular holes were cut into the front plate to accommodate the lugs of two large circular escutcheons. Only the left escutcheon survives. The lugs of the escutcheon are 3 cm in length, which indicates the need for a wooden core to support these heavy ornamentations.</p>	


The surviving escutcheon was cast in copper alloy. Its decoration consists of seven circles surrounded by spirals and trumpet motifs. Six of the circles rise slightly from the escutcheon disk and surround a small circle at the centre. This inner circle is higher than the surrounding metalwork, and while it is currently empty, the setting would have once held a piece of glass or gemstone. The missing escutcheon would have likely mirrored the design of its surviving counterpart.

The ornamentation of the surviving copper-alloy plates is minimal. The front plate features interlocking semi-circles incised around the edges of the plate. Between the settings for the escutcheons, interlocking circles are arranged vertically. The left side plate also features a similar application of semi-circles incised around its edges. All the circles were incised with the aid of a compass; marks left by the compass point can still be seen on the front plate.

The cast copper-alloy suspension strap is composed of two parts—the top portion of the hinge features a plate with an incised square pattern divided by nine vertical lines. The hinge itself is attached to this plate by two riveted fittings made in the shape of five-petal flowers. The bottom portion of the hinge consists of two parts: the upper portion of the hinge itself and a lower, decorative portion. This lower portion features a zoomorphic D-shape design, which terminates in two bird heads that face inward. To the left, right and bottom of the D-shape base are cavities for circular inserts, of which the upper right setting still contains its piece of conical blue glass. The upper portion of the hinge appears to be a later repair, possible twelfth-century, as indicated by Gothic lettering: I H C. Small pieces of leather also survive on the suspension strap.

Dimensions	Materials
Front Panel: Height 7.3 cm Length 19.2 cm  Endplate:                      Disc: Height 7.1 cm                  Diameter 4.7 cm Length 8.4 cm	Copper alloy, tinning
Select Bibliography	
(Ó Floinn 1989/1990, pl. 50, Mahr and Raftery 1976, Wilde 1857, 641)	

**Clonmore shrine**

Common Names	Present Location
Clonmore or Blackwater shrine	The Ulster Museum, Belfast
	
Description	
<p>The Clonmore shrine was found in a fragmented state and has since been reassembled. Subsequent excavations yielded a piano hinge, two suspension-strap fragments, and a complete locking pin; the lid's gables remain missing.</p> <p>The shrine was originally composed of nine separate copper-alloy panels that were soldered together. The roof was attached to the box by a piano hinge equal in length to the back plate. On the roof plate, there are settings arranged in the shape of a downward-pointing triangle, although only the bottom blue glass insert survives. Both of the two glass inserts survive on the face of the box. The left box endplate has a small hole for the locking pin in the upper right corner of the plate.</p>	

The decoration of the shrine consists of ornamentation incised directly into the surface of the tinned metal sheets, exposing the copper alloy underneath. The overall design of the face is symmetrical, with spirals and elongated S-scrolls. The ornamentation is contained within incised rectangles, which allows the remaining negative space to act as a thin border. The face of the Clonmore shrine has curvilinear designs that unfurl out from each of the blue glass inserts. The placement of the glass inserts forms an elongated X-shape.


The back-roof plate features a large central asymmetrical spiral motif surrounded by trumpet patterns. The back-box plate again follows the general composition of the front of the shrine: two large spiral forms are placed on the left and right side of the plate. The three incised circles create an upward pointing triangle. Curvilinear designs fill in the negative space.

The box endplates also feature similar ornamentation; two vertical S-scrolls flank a central circular design, itself containing curvilinear designs that are analogous to those found on the back roof and panel of the shrine.

Dimensions	Materials
Height 8.0 cm Length 8.2 cm Width 2.7 cm	Copper alloy, tinning, glass
Select Bibliography	
(Bourke 1991, 103-6, 1993, 14-6, 1994/5, Laing 2006, 177-9, Ó Floinn 1994, 6, Ryan 1991, 2013, 223-4)	



## Emly shrine

Common Names	Present Location
None	The Museum of Fine Arts, Boston
	
Description	
<p>The shrine is a wooden box with a trapezoidal lid that was carved from a single block of yew wood. The two hinges that attach the lid to the box are located on the back of the shrine and are modern additions. Like the Amiata shrine, the Emly shrine is not covered in metal plates but is rather decorated with thin beams of tinned lead that provide a decorative inlay. Semi-tubular gilt mouldings have also been riveted around the edges of the shrine. The sides, back, and bottom of the shrine are plain. Three round escutcheons with champlevé enamel and now-empty settings have also been attached to the shrine over the inlay. Two of the escutcheons have been placed on the front of the box, and one has been placed on the front lid, forming an upward-pointing triangle. The roof is fitted with a ridgepole composed of a semi-tubular beam that ends in zoomorphic terminals decorated in champlevé enamel. At the centre of the ridgepole is a house-shaped</p>	

shrine form embellished with champlevé enamel. The suspension straps do not survive. The pin-lock hole is visible on the left end, in the top right corner.

The grid motif is symmetrical and covers the front of the roof and lid. The tinned-lead grid is formed via step-patterns with floral motifs placed in their centres; the grid itself was hammered directly into the wood of the shrine. The combination of the step-pattern and the centre floral motifs continues underneath the three escutcheons. The overall effect is twofold: first, the interaction of the two elements of the design creates a cross-form. This can be seen clearest in the section of inlay between the escutcheons on the box. The step-pattern forms a cross and at its centre sits a four-petal floral motif. Second, the complexity of the tinned-lead pattern and its distribution across the surfaces of the shrine creates the illusion of metal panelling.

The three round escutcheons are all of a similar type and design. The escutcheons are composed of four sections: a raised outer ring of champlevé enamel, two recessed rings of champlevé enamel, and a centre setting which no longer contains its inserts. The decoration on the outer ring is composed of alternating rectangles of yellow and green champlevé. The pattern on the central ring is created by green and yellow T-shaped cells of champlevé that mirror each other. Finally, the innermost ring's design is comprised of yellow enamel rectangles separated by green squares.

The beam of the ridgepole, which is cast in copper alloy, is tubular. The zoomorphic terminals, which appear as two beasts with long curling snouts or bills that face inward, are further rendered with champlevé enamel. The snouts of the beasts are decorated in yellow enamel while the bodies of the beasts are rendered in green. There are small recesses for the eyes of the beasts but their contents, whether it was enamel or glass paste, no longer survive. As mentioned above, a house-shaped shrine form sits at the centre of the ridgepole. Alternating green and yellow rectangles of champlevé enamel decorate this miniature house-shaped form.

Dimensions	Materials
Height 9.2 cm Length 10.5 cm Width 4.1 cm	Copper alloy, tin, lead, gilding, yew wood, champlevé enamel
Select Bibliography	
(Armstrong 1922, 137, 1977, Crawford 1923, 84-5, Laing 2006, 362, Mancinelli 1975, 252-4, Fanning 2009, Mahr and Raftery 1976, 109-10, Swarzenski 1954)	

## Hokksund shrine

Common Names	Present Location
None	Museum of Cultural History at the University of Oslo



Description	
<p>Two fragments of an Insular house-shaped shrine, consisting of a copper-alloy panel and a fragment of a suspension strap, were discovered near Hokksund, Norway in 2014.</p> <p>The rectangular panel was constructed from cast copper alloy; four small holes found on the corners of the panel suggest that it may have once been fitted to a wooden core. There are nine pieces of <i>millefiori</i> distributed symmetrically across the surface of the panel, which also retains traces of ivory coloured enamel. The <i>millefiori</i> is composed of two squares of blue and white triangles, four squares of yellow and black checkerboard, two triangle-shaped pieces with black dots on a red background, and two squares with a black and light blue checkerboard pattern.</p> <p>Only the upper portion of the suspension strap survives. The front is decorated with enamel inlay and glass. Currently, the enamel appears as green, white, and yellow, although these present colours have degraded and may have been different in their original state. Two fields of green glass inlay with checkerboard patterns can be seen on the lower portion of the strap. The strap terminates in a small loop. The back of the strap is plain.</p>	
Dimensions	Materials
Plate: Length 2.9 cm Width 2.1 cm  Suspension Strap: Length 3.6 cm Width 1.3 cm	Copper alloy, <i>millefiori</i> , enamel
Select Bibliography	
(Tafjord)	



## London shrine

Common Names	Present Location
None	The British Museum, London
 <p>The image shows two views of the London shrine. The top view is a trapezoidal roof panel, and the bottom view is a rectangular box plate. Both panels are decorated with intricate niello designs, including interlaced knotwork, swastikas, and other religious symbols. The panels are severely clipped around their edges, but traces of chamfered edges suggest they were once bound by a ridge-pole and metallic frames.</p>	
Description	
<p>The London shrine consists of only two silver panels: a roof and box plate. Both the trapezoidal roof and rectangular box plate are severely clipped around their edges, but traces of chamfered edges suggest that the panels were once bound by a ridge-pole and metallic frames as seen on other house-shaped shrines. Overall, some 24 individual holes can be found on both panels. None of the settings, mounts, or nails survive. The panels are decorated entirely in niello, while their backs are plain.</p>	




The decoration of the roof plate is divided into four triangular fields by a large X- shaped band, which is itself ornamented with hatching. The three upper triangular fields are filled with zoomorphic interlace that has been further decorated with speckling. The lowermost section is decorated with a human head and speckled interlacing.

The box panel is decorated with a series of three roundels with cruciform patterns, reminiscent of disc brooches. The leftmost roundel is composed of a cruciform filled with hatching and four plain triquetras. There is a hole at the centre of the cruciform, where a mount or fitting was once held. The centre roundel mirrors the motifs of the left roundel, save that in the central roundel the triquetras are also decorated with hatching. Four triquetras filled with hatching surround the central roundel. The rightmost roundel repeats the motif of the first two, complete with a hole at its centre. In this final case, the roundel is decorated with four plain triquetras set in a cruciform which has been decorated with more restrained hatching, appearing fully on the top and the bottom portion of the cross and only in the borders of the arms of the cross. Finally, a rectangular border of hatching has been used to frame the ornamentation on both the lid and box plate.

Dimensions	Materials
Lid: Length 12.1 cm Height 5.1 cm  Box: Length 12.6 cm Height 5.2 cm	Silver, niello
Select Bibliography	
(Webster, Backhouse, and Turner 1984, 15, Webster 2012, 218-20, Wilson 1955)	

## Lough Erne shrine (A)

Common Names	Present Location
None	The National Museum of Ireland, Dublin
	
Description	
<p>The shrine consists of tinned copper-alloy plates that have been riveted onto a hollowed-out wooden core of yew wood. The trapezoidal lid was attached by hinges, now eroded. The panels of the shrine are secured by a series of tubular mouldings. Of the three round escutcheons that would have originally adorned the front of the shrine, only the roof escutcheon remains. Four large rectangular holes on the face of the box mark the location of the two lost escutcheons, while the overall placement of the three escutcheons forms an upward pointing triangle. An incised piece of tinned copper alloy has been riveted to the lid along the lip of the box. The shrine is also fitted with a single cast ridgepole with zoomorphic terminals and a centre ornamentation in the form of a house-shaped shrine. While the back of the shrine is highly damaged, the cavities marking the placement of three circular copper-alloy escutcheons and their</p>	

borders remain. The left endplate's suspension strap survives in a fragmented state as a D-shaped lower hinge mount. The right suspension hinge is entirely missing. The opening for the pin-lock is visible in the upper right corner of the left endplate.

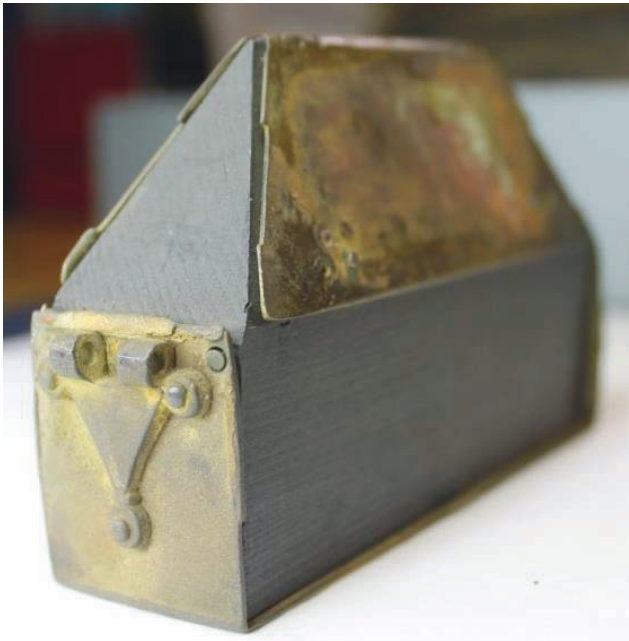
The surviving escutcheon is dish-shaped with a raised plain lip. The interior space of the escutcheon is composed of gilt chip-carved interlace in the shape of a ring. The centre of the escutcheon rises slightly and has been fitted with a piece of amber. The lost face escutcheons would likely be of a similar if not identical design. As for the back of the box, however, the surviving rings of copper alloy are entirely unlike the escutcheons of the front; their design is rather reminiscent of the round ornaments seen on the Melhus shrine. In this case, rings of copper alloy surround flat medallions.

The ridgepole is solid cast. The front of the ridgepole is decorated with chip-carved interlace that has been gilt. At the centre of the ridgepole, a house-shaped shrine form rises from the beam. It too is decorated with gilt chip-carved interlace that accents the lid and box of the shrine-shaped decoration. The back of the ridgepole is plain although the top of the beam shows signs of hatching.

The terminals of the ridgepole are two beast heads that face inward. Their bodies are formed through chip-carved interlace, and their mouths or snouts are formed by a triskelion knot. There is a recess on each terminal for the eyes of the beasts, but their inserts have been lost. The left suspension fitting is D-shaped and is decorated with chip-carved interlace. At the bottom of the mount, a circular setting holds a piece of blue glass that rises slightly outside its setting.

Dimensions	Materials
Height 16.0 cm Length 17.0 cm Width 7.8 cm	Copper alloy, tinning, glass, amber, gilding, wood
Select Bibliography	
(McKenna 1897, 41-4, Anderson 1909, 268, Blindheim 1984, 135-7, Coffey 1910, 42-4, Conway 1919, 235-6, Crawford 1923, 82-3, Mahr and Raftery 1976 pl. 90, Murphy 1891-1893, 1892, 1989, 135-7)	


## Lough Erne shrine (B)

Common Names	Present Location
None	The National Museum of Ireland, Dublin
	
Description	
<p>The shrine was found in a fragmented state inside the larger of the Lough Erne shrines and has since been reconstructed. The surviving panels have been mounted onto a piece of modern wood to allow for easier display. The smaller Lough Erne shrine consists of a series of panels that once formed a box with a trapezoidal lid, which would have been attached by hinges, now lost. The plates would have originally been soldered together.</p> <p>The back panel of the box and the gables of the roof are still missing. Only the lower portions of the two suspension straps survive. These lower strap portions are composed of cast copper-alloy hinges that take the shape of a downward pointing triangle. Each point of the triangle was constructed with a circular opening to allow the mount to be riveted in place.</p>	

The entrance for the pin-lock is found in the upper left corner of the right endplate. Small holes located on the upper edges of the roof plate suggest that the shrine was once fitted with a ridgepole. Two small squares of interlocking metalwork have been riveted to the face of the shrine.

Dimensions	Materials
Height 6.8 cm Length 10.6 cm Width 3.2 cm	Copper alloy
Select Bibliography	
(McKenna 1897, 41-4, Anderson 1909, 268, Blindheim 1984, 135-7, Coffey 1910, 42-4, Conway 1919, 235-6, Crawford 1923, 82-3, Mahr and Raftery 1976 pl. 90, Murphy 1891-1893, 1892, 1989, 135-7)	

## Melhus shrine

Common Names	Present Location
None	Vitenskapsmuseet, Trondheim
	
Description	
<p>The Melhus shrine is a box with a trapezoid-shaped roof constructed from a hollowed-out core of yew wood. The roof is attached to the box by two hinges on the back of the shrine. The wooden core of the shrine has been covered by thin copper-alloy panels riveted to its surface. These plates are further secured by a series of semi-tubular frames riveted to the corners of the shrine. A thin lip of the wood is visible in the lower left corner of the shrine, where part of the metal plate has worn away. This feature indicates that the shrine was designed with the intention of hiding the wooden core by fitting the metal plates and tubular rods flush against the wooden support.</p> <p>The ridgepole of the shrine consists of two distinct components: 1) a tube of rolled copper alloy and 2) one surviving animal head terminal that has been attached to the lid. Two notches, one on each end of the roof, create recesses that would have allowed both terminals to sit flush against the roof. This is a unique feature amongst known house-shaped shrines, as all other surviving</p>	



ridgepoles rest on the apex of their roofs with their terminals extending outward. While the shrine would have originally had two suspension straps, only the left strap survives.

The lower portion of the suspension strap consists of a heart-shaped form within a triangle. The points of the triangle terminate in three circles that then hold pieces of glass. The upper portion of the hinge is long, flat, and rectangular. Red enamel fills two rectangular fields on the flat segment of the upper hinge. The two rectangular fields contain *millefiori* in yellow, black, and white. The upper hinge plate terminates in a ring decorated with red enamel. The same *millefiori* motif is also used to decorate the centre of the upside-down heart-shape in the lower portion of the suspension strap.


The back of the shrine was not covered with metal, leaving the wooden surface exposed. The metal endplates of the box and the hips of the roof are heavily fragmented and devoid of decoration. The left endplate features a small opening in the upper right corner where the locking pin can still be seen. The copper-alloy locking pin was constructed from a pointed rod attached to a small hinged tab.

The face of the shrine would have originally been decorated by three round repoussé copper-alloy plates with circular frames. One of these circles is set onto the roof while the other two have been placed on the face of the box; the composition of these mounts creates an upward-pointing triangle. Only the upper mount survives, though it is without its frame; the sheet is decorated with three radiating spirals. On the box of the shrine, the two frames for the repoussé can be seen, although the panels themselves no longer survive.

Dimensions	Materials
Height 8.3 cm Length 11.8 cm Width 4.7 cm  Diameter of Escutcheons with Ring 3.3 cm	Copper alloy, tinning, enamel, <i>millefiori</i> , wood
Select Bibliography	

(Coffey 1910, 43, Conway 1919, 235-6, Crawford 1923, 85-6, Petersen 1907, Mahr and Raftery 1976, pl. 10, Marstrander 1965)

**Moissac shrine**

Common Names	Present Location
Moissac shrine, London chrismatory	Private collection, London
	
Description	
<p>The Moissac shrine is a composite piece, constructed from a box of carved oak wood and metal panels. The lid of the shrine is trapezoidal, and the gables are slightly concave; the lid is attached to a rectangular box by two hinges located on the back of the shrine. The panels of the shrine are decorated in repoussé with a series of animals and figures. The shrine also shows signs of renovation; a small cavity was carved into the bottom of the shrine and then covered with a piece of modern pine. Additionally, the two box endplates have been switched. In this second case, the hole for the locking pin is found on the metal panel of the current right endplate. However, the entrance for the locking pin is located</p>	

on the left side of the wooden box. Finally, as Webster argues, the epigraphy found on the ridge-pole suggest that it too is a later addition.

The exterior of the shrine consists of large, decorated copper-alloy panels that have been nailed to the wooden core. These panels have further been secured by a silver frame that follows along the edges of the shrine, which are themselves attached to the wooden core with iron nails. The current face of the shrine depicts two separate scenes. The scene found on the lid depicts a figure with a cruciform nimbus holding a book, which is further flanked by two fruit-filled vines. The scene found on the face of the box depicts four figures, each with a nimbus. The front lid appears to depict Christ while the box depicts the four Evangelists. On the back of the shrine, the lid depicts vine-scroll growing from a chalice. The same motif is depicted directly below on the box panel along with two deer.

The gable panels each depict a quadrupedal beast while the endplates each depict winged beasts, possibly gryphons. Their original placement would have had the beasts' faces pointed to the viewer in a manner similar to the inward facing zoomorphic ridgepoles found on other Insular house-shaped shrines.

The gilded copper-alloy ridgepole is cylindrical and is fitted with inlaid bands of silver. Three empty settings on the top of the ridgepole once held pieces of glass or gemstone. The front of the ridgepole contains two panels of interlacing while the back of the ridgepole contains two sections of smooth, gilt copper alloy. The ends of the ridgepole each depict an equal-armed cross intersected by a four-petal flower or knot motif.

Two inscriptions can be found on the ridge-pole: 1) on the top of the ridge-pole the Latin abbreviations KA-P and BA-P have been inscribed, while 2) along the three bands that hold the empty gemstone or glass settings three inscriptions written in Greek characters can be found: K-C Θ-C, I-C X-C, and C-O T-P. The abbreviated I-C X-C is directly over the image of Christ.

Dimensions	Materials
Height 15.6 cm Length 13.0 cm Width 6.0 cm	Copper alloy, wood, silver, gilding
Select Bibliography	
(O'Donoghue 2011, 87-9, 2011, 118-9, 2007, 16, Webster 2012, 165-7, 2014)	

## Monymusk shrine

Common Names	Present Location
Monymusk shrine, Reliquary of St Columba	The National Museum of Scotland, Edinburgh
	
Description	
<p>The Monymusk shrine is comprised of a box and trapezoidal lid carved from a block of yew wood. Copper-alloy panels have been riveted to the base, endplates, gables, the back of the box, and the lid; the lid was also fitted with two hinges to secure it to the box of the shrine. On the face of the shrine, silver panels have been riveted to the lid and the box. Semi-tubular copper-alloy frames further secure the panels to the wooden core. There is evidence for six escutcheons on the face of the shrine, though only two round and two rectangular escutcheons survive. From left to right, the lid features a</p>	



rectangular, circular, and then rectangular escutcheon. A complementary design was used on the box, where the pattern is reversed. In this case, however, only the leftmost escutcheon survives. On top of the shrine is a semi-tubular ridgepole with a centre decoration, which is shaped like a house-shaped shrine, and two zoomorphic terminals. Only the left suspension strap survives. In the upper right corner of the left endplate, the pin-lock hole is visible.

The front silver panels are decorated with pointillé zoomorphic interlace. This interlace is difficult to discern, but when light is cast across the surface of the shrine, the bodies of the beasts appear to writhe. This ornamentation borders the six escutcheons

The round escutcheons are formed in two parts: the outer ring is composed of cast copper alloy, decorated with three rectangles of red enamel. These rings rest over a gilt medallion of chip-carved copper alloy. The rectangular escutcheons are solid cast as one piece and are decorated with gilt chip-carved interlace. Red enamel has been used to decorate the corners of the rectangular escutcheons, as well as their centres.


Traces of gilding were found on the cylindrical portion of the ridgepole, indicating that it would have originally been entirely gilt. Presently, only the centre decoration and the terminals retain their gilding. The two beast terminals face the central rectangular decoration, which contains a four part interlace pattern. The upper portion of this decoration has a slight indentation in it, suggesting that at some point the centre decoration held a setting for either glass, enamel, or gemstones. As first noted by Stevenson, the house-shaped shrine section of the ridgepole and the placement of the sections on the lid and base of the box forms both a cross and a triangle.

The bodies of the zoomorphic terminals are formed by an interlace pattern that transforms into two downward pointing bills that surround a circular piece of blue glass. The decoration and settings of the ridgepole can be seen both on the front and back of the shrine. While the shrine would have once held four pieces of blue glass on its ridgepole, only the front left setting retains its glass.

The surviving left suspension strap is decorated with spiral designs as well as red and yellow enamel. The lower portion of the mount is D-shaped and is decorated with a yellow enamel D-shaped sunburst or flower pattern set within a field of red enamel. S-patterns are used to decorate the upper portion of the strap which then terminates in a circular spiral pattern; a large rectangular opening can also be seen on the strap. A circular setting is visible at the top of the strap and is filled with red enamel.

Dimensions	Materials
Height 8.4 cm Length 11.0 cm Width 5.4 cm  Round escutcheon on Box, diameter 2.1 cm Round escutcheon on Lid, diameter 1.8 cm Rectangular escutcheon 1.1 x 0.8 cm	Copper alloy, silver, enamel, glass, gilding, wood
Select Bibliography	
(Anderson 1879-80, 43-4, Blindheim 1984, 37-9, Caldwell 2001, Blackwell 2012, 46-42, Coffey 1910, Conway 1919, 235-6, Eeles 1933-4, Mahr and Raftery 1976, 113-5, Stevenson 1983, Small, Thomas, and Wilson 1973, 128-30, 1989, 134-5)	

**Mortain shrine**

Common Names	Present Location
Mortain chrismal, reliquary, chismatory, or <i>coffret</i>	Collégiale Saint-Évroult de Mortain
	
Description	
<p>The Mortain shrine consists of a carved beech wood box with a rectangular base and trapezoidal lid. The lid is attached to the box by two hinges located on the back of the shrine. The overall form of the shrine is reminiscent of other hip-roof Insular house-shaped shrines, save that its lid is slightly pointed. The cross mount located at the apex of the lid and the two butterfly terminals are later additions. The surface of the shrine is covered in panels of gilt copper</p>	


alloy that are decorated in repoussé. These panels are nailed to the wooden core of the shrine, and there is no evidence of a metalwork frame. The shrine was not constructed with hinged suspension straps. However, two small rings on the endplates would have allowed the shrine to either be worn or hung. The shrine has gone through a series of renovations and alterations, most noticeably seen on the face of the shrine where a large rectangular hole was carved into the lid. A pin-lock hole can be seen on the upper left corner of the right endplate, although the pin itself does not survive.

The face of the shrine depicts four figures. On the lid of the shrine, an angel is flanked by two inward facing birds. Unfortunately, the body of the angel was lost when the large rectangular hole was carved into the wood and copper alloy of the shrine. On the face of the box, Christ is shown flanked by two angels, SS Michael and Gabriel. Christ is depicted with a cruciform-nimbus, gesturing to a book that he holds in his left hand. To Christ's right, St Michael the Archangel gestures to a round object in his left hand and is identified by an abbreviated inscription, 'SCS M-H'. Mirroring St Michael, St Gabriel the Archangel is rendered on Christ's left, again depicted gesturing to a round object held in his left hand, and accompanied by a short inscription, 'SCS GAB'.

The rest of the panels of the shrine do not feature any additional ornamentation. On the back lid of the shrine, a short inscription can be seen, written in Mercian Runes. The inscription has been transcribed and translated by Page as 'good helpe: æadan Þiison ciismel gewarahtæ,' or 'God help Ædan who made this *ciismel*.

Dimensions	Materials
Height 10.5 cm Length 13.5 cm Width 5.0 cm	Wood, copper alloy, gilding
Select Bibliography	
(Cahen 1930, Looijenga and Vennemann 2000, 111-2, Page 1962, 906, Von Erhardt-Siebold 1935, 1991, 175-6)	

**Ranvaik shrine**

Common Names	Present Location
Ranveigs skrin, Ranvaik shrine, Copenhagen reliquary	Nationalmuseet, Copenhagen
	
Description	
<p>The Ranvaik shrine is a box with a hip-roof attached via two hinges located on the back of the shrine. The lid and box are both formed out of tinned copper-alloy plates that have been riveted onto a box of hollowed-out yew wood. The endplates of the box and lid are both concave, which is reminiscent of the Bobbio and Clonmore shrines. Thick rectangular mouldings outline the shrine and help to secure the metal panels to the wooden core. Three rectangular escutcheons appear on the front of the shrine—two on the box and one on the lid. This placement forms an upward pointing triangle; the three circular escutcheons on the back of the shrine mirror the placement of those seen on the</p>	



front. Only the lower D-shaped fragments of the suspension straps remain on the endplates, attached to the shrine via rivets. The suspension fragments terminate in a trefoil design. On the right side in the upper left corner, the pin-lock hole is visible. A cast ridgepole has been riveted to the top of the shrine.

The front of the shrine is decorated with two layered copper-alloy panels. The top panel is constructed from a piece of copper alloy with T- and L-shaped sections cut out from it; small circles were punched into this panel and follow along the centre of the bands. The bottom panel is a flat sheet of tinned copper alloy. The front of the box is also fitted with three rectangular escutcheons that have been soldered into place. While these escutcheons have a raised border of champlevé enamel laid out in a cross pattern, many cells have lost their enamelling. The escutcheons have all lost their settings, which may have once been glass or gemstones. Both endplates feature incised ribbon interlace while the hips of the roof are plain. The surface of all four endplates has been tinned.

The ornamentation found on the back of the shrine consists of ribbon interlace that has been incised onto a tinned copper-alloy panel. Three solid cast copper-alloy escutcheons have been placed on the roof and box to form an upward-pointing triangle. The escutcheons are dish-shaped with a raised, rounded lip and a slightly recessed centre that is filled with a spiral motif. The decoration in the panels follows the frames of the circular inserts closely, demonstrating that the decoration was made specifically with the escutcheons in mind.

The ridgepole of the shrine does not feature animal head terminals. Instead, the ridgepole terminates in flat geometric shapes consisting of a circle followed by a tear-drop recess and two circles set at the ends of the pole. The top beam of the ridgepole is further decorated with rectangular bands of red enamel which have been subdivided into smaller squares. The centre ornamentation on the upper part of the ridgepole consists of two lemniscates placed perpendicularly, creating a small cross-form. While the ridgepole does not feature zoomorphic terminals, a section of zoomorphic interlace was incised into the back of the ridgepole.

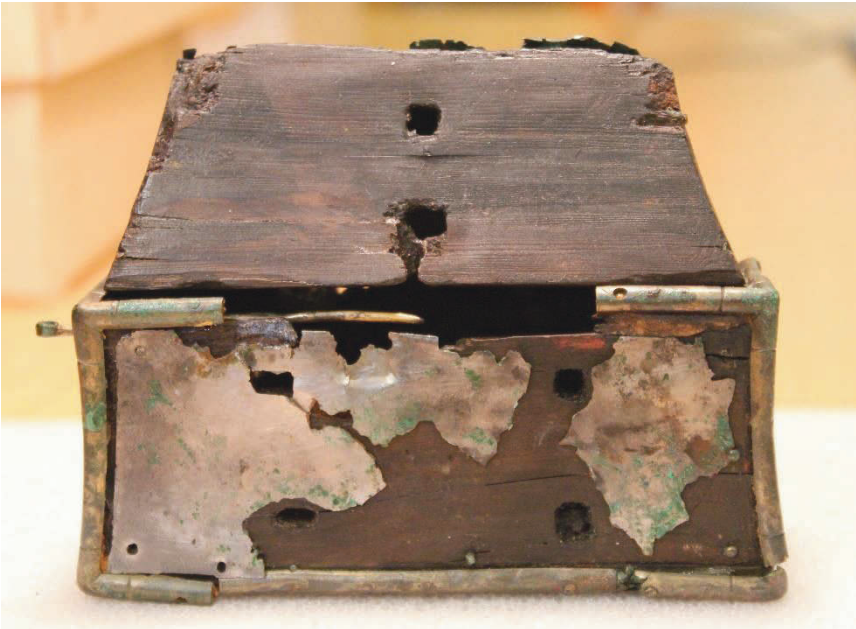


There is a tenth-century runic inscription on the bottom of the shrine that reads ‘Ranvaik a kistu thasa’, which is accompanied by an image of four ship's prows and a chain.

Dimensions	Materials
Height 9.3 cm, Length 13.4 cm Width 5.5 cm	Copper alloy, enamel, tinning, wood

Select Bibliography
(Blindheim 1984, 47-8, Mancinelli 1975, 251-8, Ryan 1998, 1989, 134)

## Setnes shrine

Common Names	Present Location
None	Vitenskapsmuseet, Trondheim
	
Description	
<p>The Setnes shrine is a highly damaged box with a trapezoidal lid attached via two hinges. The shrine is composed of a hollowed-out wooden core of yew wood onto which tinned copper-alloy sheets have been mounted. The hinges of the house-shaped shrine have eroded, and modern screws have since been used to secure the loose panels to the wooden core. Much like the Melhus shrine, the Setnes shrine also features a semi-tubular frame that helped to secure the metal sheets to the wooden core. The shrine would have also been fitted with a ridgepole and two suspension straps, although these are now lost. Two rectangular perforations on the endplates mark where the lugs of the suspension strap would have been secured to the wooden core. Additionally, the pin hole for the lock is visible in the top right corner on the left endplate.</p>	

Some of the ornamentation on the shrine still survives. On the back of the shrine, two lozenge-shaped mounts are visible. Two empty cavities in the metal and wood mark the place of a lost third.


The mounts are composed of a simple copper-alloy frame while red enamel has been used to decorate their corners. Together the three escutcheons create an upward pointing triangle.

The escutcheons on the front of the shrine do not survive, but their arrangement can be deduced through examining the cavities created for their lugs. Much like the back of the shrine, the front escutcheons are also arranged in a triangular pattern, with one escutcheon placed on the roof and two placed on the box. However, the pattern of the perforations on the front differs from those on the back. The back's perforations are oriented horizontally while those on the front are vertical. Along with the weathering on the front of the box, this suggests that the front likely used the same type of square-shaped escutcheon, but orientated it differently.

The locking pin still survives and is constructed from a simple rod of copper alloy with a looped terminal.

Dimensions	Materials
Height 8.8 cm Length 11.5 cm Width 5.0 cm Width of Escutcheon on Lid 2.7 cm	Copper alloy, tin, enamel, wood
Select Bibliography	
(Blindheim 1984, 34-6, Marstrander 1965)	

## Shannon shrine

Common Names	Present Location
None	The National Museum of Ireland, Dublin
	
Description	
<p>The Shannon shrine is a box with a trapezoidal lid, which was attached to the back of the box by hinges. The shrine has been constructed out of a series of folded copper-alloy sheets. The main body of the box is constructed from one sheet of folded copper alloy while the front and back of the roof are formed out of a single sheet of copper alloy that has been folded in half. The separate endplates of the box and the gables of the roof were attached to both sheets by rivets. In addition, two panels of plain silver were attached to the front of the roof and box by a series of rivets to the cupreous base. All the metal sheets were secured in place by a semi-tubular and rectangular framework that was</p>	


then riveted to the copper-alloy base. One square escutcheon survives on the left side of the face. The shrine is missing its ridgepole, suspension straps, a large portion of the left endplate, and both of the gable ends.

The surviving square escutcheon would have been part of a series of escutcheons on the face of the shrine that would have formed an upward-pointing triangle. The escutcheon is cast copper alloy and is decorated with a thick border of gilt chip-carved interlace. At the centre of the escutcheon, there is an empty square setting that would have once held a piece of glass or a gemstone. The only other decorative metalwork on the shrine is two gilt chip-carved strips. One strip runs the length of the base of the roof while the other follows the top of the box directly below it; this would have accented the opening of the shrine.

The indentations on the right endplate mark the location where the suspension strap was located. The lower portion of the suspension hinge would have been triangular, while three circular openings at the points of the triangle would have allowed the suspension hinge to be riveted to the endplate.


Dimensions	Materials
Height 9.2 cm Length 11.0 cm Width 5.5 cm  Rectangular Escutcheon 2.2 x 2.3 cm	Copper alloy, gilding, silver
Select Bibliography	
(Coffey 1910, 42, Conway 1919, 235-6, Stevenson 1947, Mahr and Raftery 1976, 110)	

## Blackwater fragment

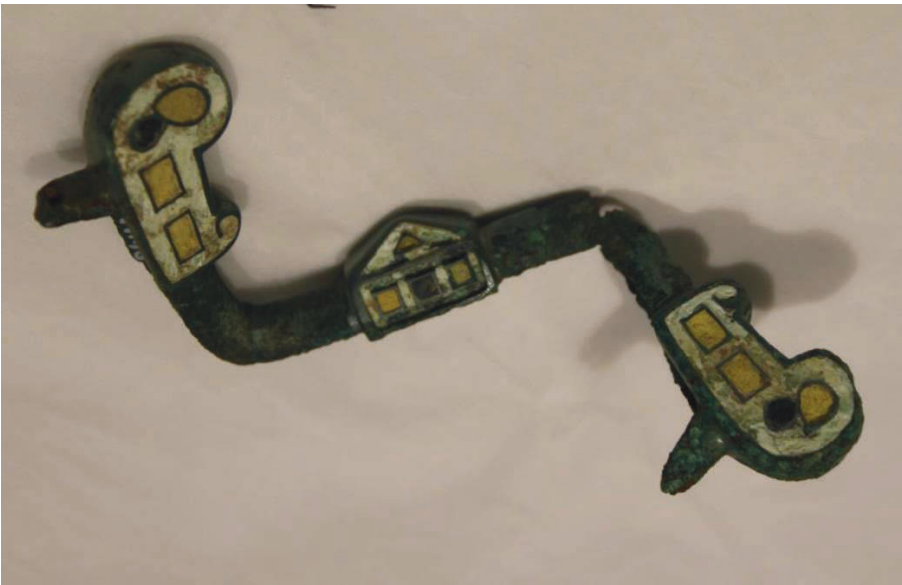
Common Names	Present Location
None	The Ulster Museum, Belfast
	
Description	
<p>The centre portion of a ridgepole of an Insular house-shaped shrine. The fragment was originally part of a cast copper-alloy ridgepole, which has been cut into a v-shaped section; it has since been distorted and cracked. On the top of the ridgepole, there is a row of black inlay, possibly niello, in a swastika pattern. The central decoration is shaped like a house-shaped shrine. The ‘gabel’ ends of this shrine form are further decorated with six-strand knots which retain remnants of gilding.</p>	
Dimensions	Materials
Length 5.75 cm	Copper alloy, gilding, niello (?)
Select Bibliography	
(Bourke 2010, 48, 1993, 26-9)	




## Blackwater terminal

Common Names	Present Location
None	The Ulster Museum, Belfast
	
Description	
<p>A terminal of a ridgepole. The mount consists of a cast copper-alloy beast-shaped terminal. Green enamel is used to define the beast's eye and fang, yellow to define sections of the body, and white enamel, likely originally red, is used to define the jaw of the beast.</p> <p>While the thin pole that juts out from the beast might suggest that the terminal was cut from a complete ridgepole, similarly constructed separate terminals are also found on the Melhus shrine.</p>	
Dimensions	Materials
Length 4.59 cm	Copper alloy, enamel
Select Bibliography	
(Bourke 2010, 56, 1993, 26-9)	


## Blackwater ridgepole

Common Names	Present Location
None	The Ulster Museum, Belfast
	
Description	
<p>A ridgepole from an Insular house-shaped shrine constructed from cast copper alloy. The ridgepole has since been distorted and bent twice along its tubular pole. At the centre of the ridgepole, a house-shaped shrine form can be seen. The roof is filled with white enamel, possibly originally red, and a yellow triangle. The 'box' section of the shrine form is also filled with white enamel, again possibly originally red, and decorated with two yellow enamel squares, along with a black square, which is possibly niello. The two terminals depict stylised beasts; the ground of the terminals is the same white, possibly red, enamel; three cells of yellow enamel and a cell of black niello mark the eyes and body of the beasts. The back is plain.</p>	
Dimensions	Materials
Length 10.5 cm	Copper alloy, enamel
Select Bibliography	
(Bourke 2010, 58, 1993, 26-9)	


## Ridgepole from the National Museum of Ireland

Common Names	Present Location
None	The National Museum of Ireland, Dublin
	
Description	
<p>This ridgepole fragment consists of a cast copper-alloy beam decorated with beast terminals and the head of a figure placed at its centre. The two beast terminals face inward, while their mouths are open; their tongues run across the surface of the ridgepole and end at two holes, which would have held nails or rivets, once used to secure the ridgepole to the roof of the shrine. The body of the beam is decorated with two panels of zoomorphic interlace. A small border filled with hatching separates the two sections of interlace. There are no discernable marks to classify this face beyond its appearance on the shrine and its position between the two beasts. The back of the ridgepole has been worn smooth. However, some traces of interlace still survive.</p>	
Dimensions	Materials
Length 11.74 cm	Copper alloy
Select Bibliography	
<p>(Armstrong 1922, 52, Crawford 1923, 86, Mahr and Raftery 1976, pl. 18, Ó Floinn 1989/1990, Swarzenski 1954, 50)</p>	

## Ridgepole from the National Museum of Ireland

Common Names	Present Location
None	The National Museum of Ireland, Dublin
	
Description	
<p>This is the longest ridgepole that survives. Only the beam, portions of the terminals, and a small section of the right flange survives. It was cast from copper alloy and has gone through extensive restoration.</p> <p>In the centre of each terminal a hole can be seen, perhaps intended as a means of carrying the shrine at some point. The ornamentation of the terminals appears curvilinear in design.</p> <p>The beam of the ridgepole is divided into three sections: at the centre of the ridgepole, a rectangle is filled with simple interlace. Above this, two trumpets or angels (?) sit on top of the rectangle. The overall composition is reminiscent of depictions of the Ark of the Covenant, which at its simplest is formed by depicting two inward facing angels on top of a rectangle. Finally, two small rectangular sections of plain copper alloy flank the centre decoration, although small incised lines can still be seen on the face of the ridgepole.</p>	
Dimensions	Materials
Length 17.78 cm	Copper alloy
Select Bibliography	
(Armstrong 1922, Crawford 1923, 85, Mahr and Raftery 1976, pl. 18)	

## Ridgepole from the National Museum of Scotland

Common Names	Present Location
None	The National Museum of Scotland, Edinburgh
	
Description	
<p>The ridgepole is constructed from cast copper alloy. The zoomorphic terminals face inward. The beast heads are bulbous and bear their teeth. The terminals flow from beast head to a tooth-shaped section of gilt interlace, which represents the neck or body of the beasts. The beam of the ridgepole is plain, although two rectangles have been incised into the beam and flank a small house-shaped shrine set into the centre of the ridgepole. The centre ‘house-shaped shrine’ is divided into two sections, a roof and lid, which are each decorated with gilt chip-carved interlace. The gilding of the ‘heads’ of the beast terminals shows additional signs of wear, suggesting that these portions of the ridgepole received more physical contact than the rest of the artefact.</p>	
Dimensions	Materials
Length 10.4 cm	Copper alloy, gilding
Select Bibliography	
(Blackwell 2012, 26, 2013, 270)	





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